Fellowship of Reconciliation
Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean

PUERTO RICO:
The Cost of Colonialism

Gilbert Rosado

Foreword by Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton

With contributions from:
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A Brief Chronology of Puerto Rico

1400s	Indigenous Peoples, calling themselves Taínos, inhabit an island they call Boriquen.
1493	On November 19, Christopher Columbus lands on the island of Boriquen on his second trip to the New World and calls it San Juan Bautista.
1511	Revolt of Taínos led by chief Aqueybana against the Spanish. Founding of San Germán and the Diocese of Puerto Rico.
1530	With the limited gold supply exhausted, many colonizers are attracted to Peru; others devote themselves to agriculture.
1775	Population is 70,250, including 6,467 black slaves.
1868	On September 23, patriots in Lares declared a republic, following a popular mass rebellion. Doctor Ramon Betances and Mariana Bracetti lead anti-colonialist forces against the policies of Spain.
1873	Slavery is abolished.
1897	On November 25, Spain grants autonomy to Puerto Rico. Population is 894,302.
1898	On February 15, the battleship *Maine* blows up in Havana Harbor; on April 21, the Spanish-American War begins; on July 25, American troops land at Guánica . Bands of "Machete-wielders" stage an unsuccessful resistance against the North Americans.
1899	The Treaty of Paris is ratified on April 11, and Spain cedes Puerto Rico to the United States.
1900	The Foraker Act makes the island a U.S. territory. The U.S. military government is replaced by a civil administration, headed by a North American governor.
1917	The Jones Act is passed in Washington on March 2, granting U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans; Puerto Ricans are drafted in the U.S. Armed Forces to serve in World War I later that year.
1934	President Roosevelt visits the island and affirms support to rehabilitate the island's economy. Leader of the Nationalist Party, Pedro Albizu Campos, is called on by sugarcane workers to lead a successful strike.
1936	Two young Nationalists kill chief of police Riggs and are later killed by the police who arrested them. Albizu Campos and eight followers are jailed for sedition.
1937	On March 21, nineteen are killed and one hundred injured in the Ponce Massacre, as police and National Guard open fire on a nonviolent Nationalist parade.
1938	In July, Nationalists fire at governor Winship during a ceremony to mark the fortieth year under American rule. Two Puerto Rican bodyguards are hit; nine Nationalists are indicted for murder.
1940	The new Popular Democratic Party (PPD), led by Luis Muñoz Marín, wins the elections. Under the banner "Bread, Land and Liberty," the PPD promises new economic reforms, bringing together activists from a variety of political tendencies.
1947	On August 4, President Truman signs Crawford-Butler Act, permitting Puerto Rico to elect its own governor.
1948	PPD wins the election, and then declares that it will favor an "associated state" (commonwealth) option for Puerto Rico. Luis Muñoz Marín becomes the first elected governor.
1950	President Truman signs Public Law 600, permitting Puerto Rico to draft its own constitution. A plebiscite to register Puerto Rican sentiment on this law is set for the following year. Nationalists attack the Puerto Rican Governor's mansion and Blair House, President Truman's residence, in protest of this increased integration. Independentistas proclaim the Second Republic in the town of Jayuya.
1951	Puerto Rican plebiscite affirms the Truman plan despite a "no" vote of 119,000 and abstentions from over 200,000 registered voters.
1952	On July 25, the Commonwealth Constitution goes into effect, after some changes insisted upon by U.S. Congress.
1954	Five Nationalists stage an armed attack on the U.S. Congress.
1967	Wide-spread repression engulfs the island: over 3,000 Nationalists are arrested, a gag rule is instituted, and Albizu Campos dies immediately following his release from the prison where he had been tortured. A second plebiscite is organized by U.S.Congress. Despite substantial non-participation, Commonwealth status is reaffirmed.
1968	The PNP (New Progressive Party), the party of statehood, triumphs in elections and has alternated administrations with the PPD ever since.
1972	First resolution by the U.N. Decolonization Committee declaring the inalienable right of Puerto Rico to self-determination.
1973	Waves of workers' strikes spread throughout the island. The National Guard is mobilized to run certain enterprises paralyzed by these strikes. University of Puerto Rico students strike and close the University.
1970s	Various attacks by newly formed armed clandestine organizations in Puerto Rico and on the U.S. mainland call for the granting of immediate independence.
1981	The U.N. Decolonization Committee recommends that the General Assembly consider Puerto Rico "a non-self-governing territory," which obliges the U.S. to submit an annual report regarding its treatment of Puerto Rico.
1985	Second U.S. invasion: over 300 U.S. FBI agents and marshals ransack homes and offices of over a hundred independentistas without warrants or informing the colonial government.
1989	President George Bush unexpectedly announces in his inaugural address that he favors statehood. Plans for a new plebiscite are initiated as supporters of all three status options agree that the colonial question needs final resolution.
1991	Hearings begin in Puerto Rico disclosing the involvement of U.S. federal agents in the 1978 assassination of two student activists at Cerro Maravilla. These hearings are likened to the Watergate of Puerto Rico.
1992	As Governor Rafael Hernandez Colón prepares for extravagant celebrations of the Columbus quincentenary, the plebiscite, which was indefinitely postponed by U.S. Congress, shows no signs of moving forward.

Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean

A Message from Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton

The journey toward the just and lasting peace we long for consists of many individual steps in the right direction. Striving for a world without colonies is one of those important steps. Perhaps, if we can imagine such a world, we can make progress toward attaining relationships between nations that are based on mutual respect rather than dependence.

Ambitious goals like world peace necessarily begin with efforts to correct injustices at home before taking on problems in other areas. Since Puerto Rico stands out as one of the globes's last colonies, we would do well to focus on helping its people secure their independence.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean has prepared this educational booklet as a tool to inspire people of faith to act against injustice in Puerto Rico. I sincerely hope that the booklets will fall into the hands of enough committed people so that by next year's end we will be at least one country closer to celebrating another milestone on the journey toward peace in "A World Without Colonies."

Sincerely in Christ,

Tom Gumbleton

The Most Reverend Thomas J. Gumbleton
Auxiliary Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Detroit
Past President, Pax Christi U.S.A.

The **Fellowship of Reconciliation** (FOR), a national, interfaith, pacifist organization, founded the Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean (TFLAC) in 1983. TFLAC's goals are 1) to strengthen communication and collaboration between North American and Latin American nonviolent movements; 2) to help FOR members become actively engaged in Latin American and Caribbean issues; 3) to support the network of North American groups working on Latin American and Caribbean issues; and 4) to promote public education related to issues of peace and justice throughout the region.

In Latin America, TFLAC works closely with groups struggling for nonviolent social change, especially with the Latin America-wide network Servicio Paz y Justicia (Service for Peace and Justice). Working for hemispheric peace and justice, TFLAC offers opportunities for education, for active engagement in fundamental peace and justice issues and for exchanging experiences in nonviolent struggle. TFLAC programs include:

- Delegations to Central America, often co-sponsored with Witness for Peace;
- Urgent Action Network, alerts and appeals in response to requests from Latin American groups, mobilizing the TFLAC network throughout the U.S. in emergency situations;
- U.S./Latin America Exchange Program, sponsoring bi-annual visits and residencies;
- Speaking tours;
- Solidaridad/Solidarity, co-publishing of a newsletter with the Committee in Solidarity with Latin American Nonviolent Movements.

TFLAC has also produced materials, helped with coalition efforts, and participated in actions involving the U.S.-Latin America "drug wars," the invasion of Panama, and the 500th anniversary of the voyage of Columbus.

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Why Focus on Puerto Rico?

an introduction by Matt Meyer

The 1990's began with the United Nations calling upon all nations and peoples to use this decade to finally remove the blight of colonialism from the face of the earth. They felt that this may be a realizable goal.

Since 1981, however, the U.N. Decolonization Committee has recommended that the General Assembly consider Puerto Rico a "non-self-governing territory," which obliges the U.S. to submit an annual report regarding its treatment of Puerto Rico. Several years ago, a process began that was intended to lead to a Puerto Rican plebiscite resolving its colonial status. As that process has been forestalled by the U.S. Congress, and events around the world have led to independence of former republics and colonies, Puerto Rico remains a glaring example of justice denied. Yet a great outcry from the progressive community, in the U.S. or around the world, has yet to be heard.

Rather than answer the question, Why focus on Puerto Rico? I find it more useful to ask, why not? Given the outpouring of material and political church support for a decolonization process in southern Africa, why not focus on the last major remaining colony of the Americas? Given the United Nations call for a decade to end colonialism, and the 1992 quincentenary call of Indigenous Nations to celebrate 500 years of resistance and work toward a future of reconciliation, why not focus attention on what is now the world's oldest direct colony? Given the wealth of solidarity offered over the last decade to our sisters and brothers in various Latin American countries, why not develop massive and mainstream solidarity for the Latin American nation that, along with Mexico, is interwoven into the very fabric of U.S. life and history? Given the consistent pacifist leadership in opposing militarism, intervention, and weapons of mass destruction, why not put significant resources toward the elimination of the major foreign military base in our own hemisphere, the Puerto Rican staging ground for all major regional interventions? In so many ways, Puerto Rico seems to be a perfect point of progressive unity.

Why, then, have so few peace and justice groups made Puerto Rico work a priority, especially in light of the U.S. State Department's priority maintenance of Puerto Rican colonial status? One reason is simple to understand, but difficult to deal with: oppression that is close to home is always harder to combat than oppression that is at a "safe" distance. This truism may especially challenge us in these times of harsh economic depression, as we walk over homeless people on our way to vigils protesting some injustice overseas. For most North American progressives, however, it is an exercise of race and class privilege to seek "elsewhere" for that moral activist work; most of us are not faced with the stark realities of survival which dictates bread-and-butter politics based in our own neighborhoods, communities, nationalities. It is, in fact, our primary moral task to overcome our personal and institutional racism and classism by understanding the struggles of those just down the block, of those who live "across the tracks," yet whose experiences within U.S. society are qualitatively different. Puerto Rico offers us the unique opportunity to engage on two levels of struggle, for Puerto Rico is both within and outside of the United States, and Puerto Ricans in each place experience unique forms of colonialism.

Perhaps a reason for reluctant support of Puerto Rican progressive movements stems from the fact that concrete resistance already exists, though in an indigenous and hard-to-define form. A strong sense of self-determination, autonomy, and self-definition, added to a shrewd sophistication regarding the nature of U.S. society, has placed Puerto Rican activists in a position of leadership under which some white activists may feel uncomfortable working. Anticolonial resistance movements, furthermore, have not come together under a single consistent organization or "united front" banner, making solidarity subject to sectarianism, inconsistency, and short-term interest. These movements have also faced significant repression, with leaders jailed, killed, and blacklisted by Puerto Rican and U.S. intelligence and police agencies. Fear of repression among North American supporters is not unwarranted, as several have faced similar, though less severe, hardships.

For those of us who are nonviolent activists, it is always important to examine the nature of any struggle we wish to support; though our aims may be similar, for us the means are as important as the ends. A brief overview of the current Puerto Rican community may find no quick Gandhi or King substitute. Looking closely at Puerto

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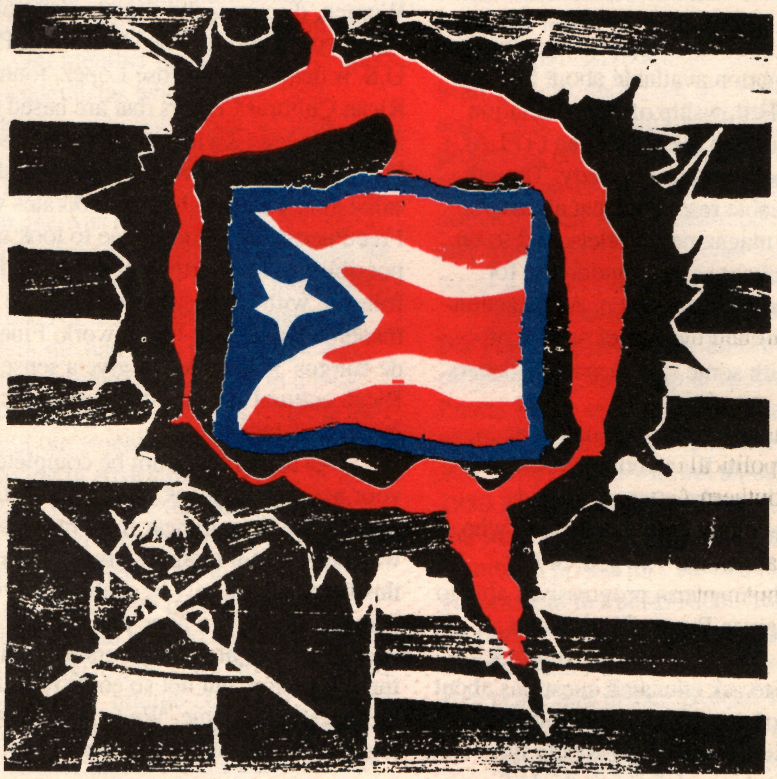
Matt Meyer is a member of the Steering Committee of the Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean. A teacher with the NYC Alternative High School's Career Education Center, he also serves on the executive committee of the War Resisters League, as a Board member of the Consortium on Peace Research, Education and Development (COPRED), and as an active member of the Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project.

Rican anticolonial politics, we will, however, find a great deal of creative, persistent nonviolent actions. The squatter communities of Villa Sin Miedo may remind one of the Gandhian campaigns of land give-backs, the University of Puerto Rico student strikes, of the tactics of SNCC. From the educational conferences against war toys to the nonviolent direct action of the people of Vieques resisting the U.S. military, the large mass of Puerto Rican activism has been as pacifist-oriented as any found in the U.S.

Of course, it is also necessary to note that armed actions have played a part in Puerto Rican resistance and that most Puerto Rican progressives will not disavow those actions or dismiss them as counterproductive. The absence of absolutist pacifism on the part of most of the Puerto Rican movement can hardly be used as an excuse, however, for withholding support from the entire freedom movement! At the very least, we have a moral responsibility to actively support those nonviolent actions and campaigns that make up the majority of anticolonial work.



Juan Rivera

At best, we need to understand how distancing ourselves from activists advocating the importance of armed struggle violates our very own principles of dialogue and reconciliation. We cannot treat these militant activists with a missionary attitude, preaching the "truth of nonviolence." We must understand, as Gandhi did, that we are all "experimenting with truth," with no progressive having a monopoly on tactics or strategies, especially in these tumultuous times. Our inactivity bespeaks our own doubts about the effectiveness of nonviolence against the oppressive nature of direct U.S. colonial power. We must meet the challenge of armed struggle with our own militant nonviolent support actions.

One problem raised by some North Americans is how to support a Puerto Rican movement for self-determination when it is not clear what the majority of Puerto Ricans "want for themselves." The complications of the three status options facing Puerto Rico—continued or enhanced commonwealth status, statehood (incorporation into the U.S.), or complete independence—have caused some potential supporters to hesitate. And while neither this booklet nor the Fellowship of Reconciliation directly advocates any one option at this time, it is clear that the current commonwealth status as it is practiced today amounts to colonialism. The leading political parties that represent each of the three options have pushed the U.S. Congress to allow some type of plebiscite or referendum to take place, because they are united in the understanding that the current realities are not the result of a real choice on the part of the Puerto Rican people.

Progressive people must take up a position, similar to the United Nations position previously cited, that calls for decolonization according to the international conditions set forth by the U.N. "Committee of 22." This demands that all powers—including the courts, police, etc.—be handed over to Puerto Rican authorities, all colonial military powers be removed, all anticolonial prisoners be released, and repression be ended. If these conditions are met, and the U.N. determines that a sufficient length of time has elapsed for a free and open U.N.-supervised vote, then we may all witness what self-determination means. Until that time, however, it is crucial to understand that U.S.-supervised plebiscites are no more genuine than the South African-administered "freedoms" of South West Africa before the independence of Namibia.

The question of "independence," however, continues to present a controversial issue for some, since many Puerto Ricans equate an end to colonialism with independence. And while those of us who are not part of the Puerto Rican nation must not presuppose to choose a status option for them, we should also not be surprised that so many of the Puerto Ricans working with us for an end to colonialism are also advocating independence. We must take great care not to be hypocritical about our own support: we did not wait until 51 percent of the U.S. people called for an end to nuclear weapons before we called for an end to the production of these warheads. Most of us base our politics not on simple majoritarianism, but on morality. If independence is seen by most of our progressive brethren as the moral solution to the colonial problem, we must struggle to respect and understand that position. We must also take great care not to be racist in our support: we did not dare say to Gandhi, "Yes, Mahatma, we see the truth to your teachings about nonviolence, but could you tone down your talk about British colonialism...we'd really like to meet one of your pacifist colleagues who does *not* support independence for India." Gandhi's satyagraha, though much more than strategy or tactic, was borne of the struggle for independence as the principle means for an end to British colonialism. Though independence may take many diverse forms, there was little room for compromise on the need for an end to paternalistic foreign rule.

One final "excuse" for a lack of support and solidarity is the lack of general information available about Puerto Rican colonial reality. The Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean (TFLAC) is pleased to present this booklet as one remedy. Though we acknowledge many valuable resources that already exist, in the form of books, magazines, leaflets, and so on, we have put together this primer as an introduction for those who are not familiar with Puerto Rico. As an action-oriented group, we have tried to give a brief outline of several areas of concern, with some statistics and sidebars for quick reference.

This booklet is not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive review of Puerto Rican colonialism and resistance; rather, we hope it sparks interest, spreads information, and points in a positive direction those who are called upon to take up this work. The goal of this booklet is not to have North American progressives able to cite chapter and verse of a given Puerto Rican status option. We hope, however, that when you are through reading it, you will be able to ask educated questions about the colonial impact of any of the options being presented. Ultimately, it is not up to us to argue successfully the value of any status choice; it is our job to get the U.S. military industrial complex off of their backs so that a Puerto Rican choice can truly be made.

The lead article, Costs of Colonialism, by noted lawyer and sociologist Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón, gives some overview of the Puerto Rican reality. Rev. Alfonso Román of the National Council of Churches presents a history of how the church has both supported colonialism and a decolonization process. Lourdes García, member of TFLAC and staff person for the United Church Board for World Ministries, outlines a Puerto Rican perspective on the possibilities of nonviolence. An interview with Tintí Deya, environmentalist and co-founder of the Adjuntas Arts and Cultural Workshop, explains some of the effects of U.S. military actions and planning. Dr. Alice Colón, member of the Puerto Rican Organization of Working Women, discusses the situation of women under Puerto Rican colonial rule. The situation of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. is dealt with by José López, founder of the Puerto Rican Cultural Centers that are based in five U.S. cities. TFLAC's Jean Zwickel, a long-time supporter of the Puerto Rican cause and activist with the Unitarian Universalist Peace Fellowship, collaborates with Meg Starr of the Free Puerto Rico Committee to look at the history of and possibilities for North American solidarity. An action page follows, with suggestions on possible campaigns and resource listings for future work. Finally, a poem by Julia de Burgos is included to give a sense of the deep Puerto Rican cultural identity that is such a crucial part of their movement for justice.

This booklet will not be complete, however, without your use and feedback. In the interests of dialogue and growth, we hope to hear from many of you reading this who want to get more involved. The educational value of this booklet will only be realized as you use it to help educate others. We hope that parts of the information contained here are controversial enough to spark interesting discussion, but not so controversial as to close down meaningful dialogue. We look forward to working together for an end to colonialism by the year 2000. ★

"The Cost of Colonialism" - Acknowledgements

TFLAC's Matt Meyer was the general coordinator of this booklet, but its production would not have been possible without the editorial expertise and design coordination of Free Puerto Rico (FPR) Committee's Louise Harter. Professional copy-editing was provided by FPR member Betsy Mickel with assistance from Liz Wiesen, and the FOR logo re-design which is used throughout the book was penned by FPR's Elspeth Meyer. Translation and transcription assistance was provided by Sonja Hubbert and Yolanda Rosa. Margarita Suarez is responsible for design, layout, computer typesetting, and the centerfold map. The students at Chicago's Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School, under the leadership of Marvin García and art teacher Mary Taylor, must be commended for their incredible art works which brighten the pages of this packet. Research for the centerfold map was done by Editorial El Coquí's Alejandro Molina. The editorial committee consisted of Lourdes García, Paul Magno, Alejandro Molina, John Lindsay-Poland, Rev. David Schilling and Andres Thomas Conteris. Helpful suggestions and encouragement was given by Marie Bloom, Richard Chartier, Don Irish, Phil McManus, Antonio Rivera, Meg Starr, Brady Tyson, Herman Will and the members of the TFLAC Steering Committee. Finally, a special word of thanks must be given to Sylvia, Marilyn and especially Simon Meyer, who learned first-hand about the colonial status of Puerto Rico shortly after he was drafted for the Korean War. As a teacher of English, Si was given the option of doing his "tour of duty" on the island, training young Puerto Rican soldiers enough vocabulary so that they could go off to Asia to take orders and get killed. His subsequent love for the Puerto Rican people, and personal understanding of some of their conditions, helped inspire this editor to become more involved. It is my hope now that this booklet may do some of the same for you.

- M.M., Summer 1992

Puerto Rico: The Costs of Colonialism

by Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón

History helps us understand why colonialism has been called a crime against humanity. The original people who inhabited Puerto Rico no longer exist; indeed they were so rapidly exterminated by the Spanish that we must turn to archaeologists and anthropologists to know our forebears.

The Spanish were haunted by the delusion that Puerto Rico was rich with gold. They hoped to extract and export the gold to Europe, using native peoples as slaves in the mines and exploiting them as a completely expendable resource. The resistance to this first genocidal phase of colonialism turned to organized rebellion by 1511, but by the middle of the sixteenth century, the entire Taíno nation—spread throughout Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic—had been devastated by forced labor, starvation, disease, and warfare.

In 1582 the Spanish royal inspector general lamented that farming had "practically stopped for lack of Indians and the high price of blacks" and begged for a thousand slaves to be sent at once. The Africans sent as slaves proved to be both the workhorses of the economy and a constant source of concern for the colonial masters as they conspired, ran away into the mountains, and organized guerilla bands.

The first modern rebellion against Spanish colonialism was organized simultaneously in Puerto Rico and Cuba in 1868. The Puerto Rican uprising, known as the "Grito de Lares," proclaimed the first Republic of Puerto Rico and placed the abolition of slavery as the first of its commandments.

The first Republic was brutally quelled, but as the result of this popular agitation, Puerto Rican deputies were sent to the Spanish Court for the first time in 1869. Slavery was abolished on April 21, 1873 (a date that is still celebrated as an official holiday), and the autonomy of Puerto Rico recognized in 1897. In 1898, however, the United States invaded Puerto Rico, abolishing all previously established rights of the Puerto Rican people and substituting for it, in the words of Commanding U.S. Army Major General Nelson A. Miles, "the largest measure of liberty consistent with military occupation."

Neither the reality of military occupation nor the yardstick by which liberty is measured in our country has changed greatly, although appearances have. Today, at least 13 percent of the best arable land in Puerto Rico is occupied by United States military bases, including one of the largest U.S. military bases outside of the United States at Roosevelt Roads (37,000 acres), located in Ceiba, Puerto Rico. Reported to be one of thirteen U.S. military facilities on the island to have nuclear capability, the Roosevelt Roads base is in violation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which declared Central and Latin America to be a nuclear-free zone.

There are, according to the Caribbean Project on Justice and Peace, an additional sixty-nine United States military installations in Puerto Rico, including the base at Fort Allen, which contains the presidential communications system known as "Mystic Star," to be used in case of nuclear emergency. Two-thirds of the island community of Vieques has been declared "off limits" to its residents so that the U.S. Navy can practice bombing, low-intensity warfare in tropical and mountainous climates, sea landings, and other tactics essential to its military strategy for Latin America in the coming decade and century.

With the approach of the expiration of both the Guantánamo Bay and Panama Canal contracts, the importance of securing Puerto Rico as a safe harbor for United States military action in the Caribbean and Central and Latin America increases, as does the concern of the United States military and financial interests in controlling "their" hemisphere. With these anxieties comes intolerance for all those who do not accept the idea that United States military interests should determine the degree of freedom they enjoy.

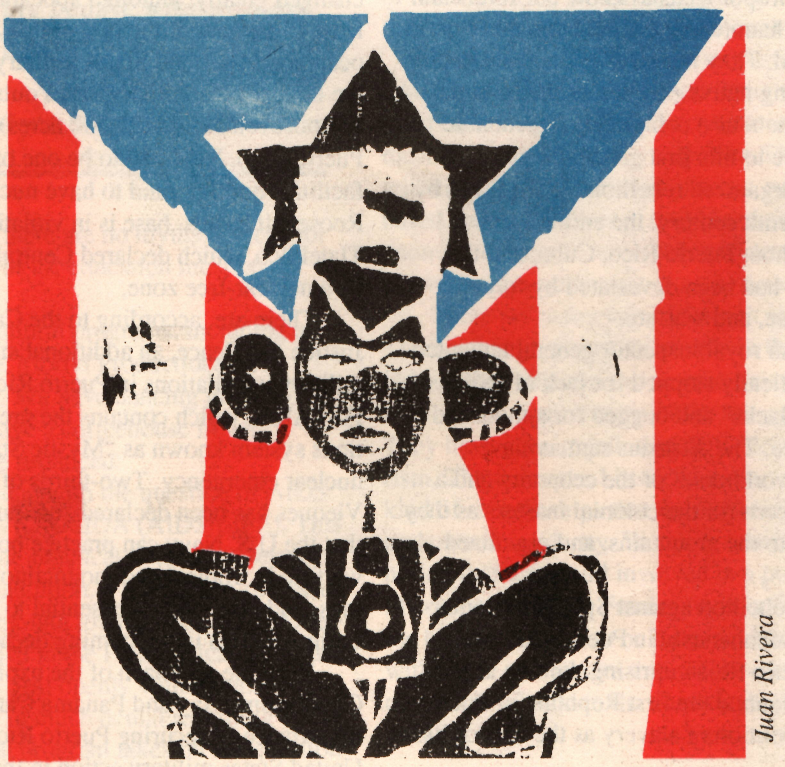
Those who have actively opposed the United States exploitation of Puerto Rico often find themselves judged in an English-language tribunal of the United States.

Luis Nieves Falcón, Ph.D., is a distinguished educator, lawyer and author who is currently coordinating Ofensiva '92, a quincentary effort to free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War. As Professor of Sociology, he was Director of the Institute of Caribbean Studies at the University of Puerto Rico. As a leading member of the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, he has coordinated several People's Tribunals on the issues of Puerto Rico, colonialism, and political prisoners. He is a noted member of the P.E.N. Club, and serves on the Board of the Council on Interracial Books for Children.

This paper is adapted from a presentation given at the Summit of the Seven Poorest Countries, held in conjunction witht The Other Economic Summit (TOES). It is published here, with permission, for the first time.

Currently eighteen Puerto Ricans are incarcerated with exceedingly long sentences—e.g., 98 years—under conditions designed to break their spirits, if not their bodies (see box on p. 12). And an additional eleven face sentences in excess of 160 years.

Repression has been a constant in our history, because it is impossible to maintain colonialism by consent, no matter how attractive the prize for the privileged few. In Puerto Rico, this repression has served three complementary functions: first, to protect the enormous U.S. economic interests and infrastructure in Puerto Rico; second, to protect the symbols of U.S. executive and military power; and finally, to control the levels of rebellion and protest endemic to the deprivation of liberty and the economic hardship that are visited upon colonized peoples.


Juan Rivera

Hand-in-hand with military occupation came economic occupation, making Puerto Rico a paradise for North American business interests. This exploitation relies on two devices: the depopulation of Puerto Rico and the transculturation and ideological assimilation of those Puerto Ricans who remained so that they would identify with "American" consumer goods, tastes, and political objectives. Depopulation has been accomplished largely through massive, economically compelled migration to the United States on the one hand, and the forced sterilization of more than 40 percent of all women of child-bearing age, on the other.

Mass migration represents more than a simple loss of population. It is also evidence of a profound transformation in the relation between the working people of Puerto Rico and their land, which in turn, has profound effects on feelings of collective and individual self-worth and self-sufficiency. In the first decades after the invasion, the economy was reoriented not to feeding the people of Puerto Rico, but to the manufacture of sugar for export. In the second half of the twentieth century, light industry, especially the manufacturing of textiles, petrochemicals, and pharmaceuticals, replaced sugar production as the primary economic activity. But the fundamental character of an economy had important cultural and psychological consequences. Rather than an expression of an encounter between our people and our land, work became a mechanism for squeezing profits out of those who did not flee the destruction of independent agriculture and could adapt to large-scale agriculture or the assembly line. Forceful and continuous repression of the work force was imposed in an effort to cultivate attitudes of conformity and dependence, rather that individual or collective initiative and independence.

In order to convert Puerto Rican farmers, small-business owners, housewives, clerics, and independent professionals into loyal employees of large foreign corporations, an ambitious program of cultural assimilation was undertaken. For the first two generations after the invasion, English was the official language of instruction in public schools. Teachers who dared speak to children in their shared native language were fired. The policy was abolished in 1948 following a long and militant strike by teachers and students.

As the "English only" movement suggests, every effort to implant "American" values and identities was made, and the public instruction system was viewed as the most appropriate vehicle for transforming cultural values. For those too old to learn to pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States every morning, it was made a crime to display the flag of Puerto Rico, even at home. All gatherings of nationalist character were persecuted as "seditious parties," and the first of the interminable lists of suspected "subversives"—a practice confirmed and declared illegal in 1989 , but which continues to this day—was compiled.

The legalization of the invasion and occupation of Puerto Rico has been critical to the process of Americanization and transculturation. Between 1898 and 1900, Puerto Rico was frankly and formally a militarily occupied territory. In 1900, the first civilian government was installed by the United States. In 1917, three weeks before the United States entered World War I, Puerto Ricans were declared to be its citizens, subject to the military draft. They were still not permitted to select the judges of their own Supreme Court or even the president of their own university, let alone those who declared war.

Between 1950 and 1952, a series of steps were taken culminating in the implementation of a new official title, Estado Libre Asociado (Free Associated State, or Commonwealth). During this period, an armed uprising by the Nationalist Party in 1950, designed to call attention to the imminent peril of assimilation and declaring a Second Republic of Puerto Rico, was put down only by jailing over 5,000 men, women, and children who participated in or were suspected of aiding the rebellion.

Another widely boycotted effort to manufacture consent to colonialism was made in 1967. This misnamed "plebiscite" of 1967 was likewise so clearly invalid that in 1989, President Bush felt obliged to acknowledge that Puerto Ricans had been treated "unfairly" by the United States and offered to hold another plebiscite, which has subsequently been canceled by U.S. Congress. But in none of these successive efforts to legitimize colonialism has the United States been willing to comply with international law and transfer all the powers to the people of Puerto Rico prior to making any binding decision on their political status.

To survive, Puerto Ricans must create a modern nation consistent with the real needs and priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean in the twenty-first century. It is a task that we cannot undertake alone, without the collective wisdom, experience, and support of other nations who have struggled to overcome colonialism and of others more experienced in nationhood in our region. We recognize the growing interdependence of the world today and look forward to participating in an international economic and social order based on cooperation, not conflict. Our first contribution to this new order is the abolition of colonialism in one of its last outposts in the modern world. ★

* *Ofensiva '92, Apartado Postal 20190, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00928*

* *Documents in English from the Permanent People's Tribunal (on Puerto Rico) and the International Tribunal (on political prisoners), coordinated by Dr. Nieves Falcón, are available from Editorial El Coqui, 1671 N. Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647 (also available, in Spanish only, is* ***De La Magica Creación Comprometida****, edited by Dr. Nieves Falcón, on the Puerto Rican POWs)*

* ***Colonial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico****, Edwin Melendez and Edgardo Melendez (Eds.), South End Press, 1992*

* ***Calamity in the Caribbean****, L.L. Cripps, Schenkman Books, 1987*

No basic change has occurred in the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico during the past forty years. Names and detailed events are different, but the United States government has relinquished none of its control over Puerto Rico, and Puerto Rico has no decision-making participation in that government. Puerto Rico is still in bondage

Currently another plan is under way, whereby the name of Puerto Rico's government is to be changed from "commonwealth" to "associated republic." It provides that the nature of that government shall be determined through discussions among representatives of the United States government and representatives of those Puerto Ricans who accept a role for the United States in deciding Puerto Rico's future. Once all of these delegates have agreed upon a formula, it is to be submitted for approval first to the United States Congress and then to the people of Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans who deny the right of the United States to decide their future will have no participation in this process.

In the United States we are currently celebrating the Bicentennial of the drafting and adoption of our own Constitution. This document was drawn up exclusively by delegates named by the various states, meeting behind closed doors, with even the windows nailed shut, throughout the muggy Philadelphia summer of 1787.

If the procedure now deemed appropriate for Puerto Rico had been followed then, only Tories would have been present, and they would have been accompanied by representatives named by King George III and by Lord North. Such personages as George Washington, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin would have been absent, since none of these could have accepted any role for the British Crown in determining the future of our country. And whatever agreement might have been devised by such an assembly would have had to be ratified by the British Parliament as well as by the people of the United States.

To call such a procedure "self-determination" would have been ludicrous, but no more ludicrous than to apply that name to anything that has yet occurred or is now being planned for Puerto Rico.

Could "We, the People of the United States" commemorate the 200th anniversary of our Constitution in any better way than by following the recommendation made by the United Nations Committee on Decolonization, that we transfer to the people of Puerto Rico all powers we now hold over them and their territory, leaving them completely free to determine their own future in their own way? *– **Ruth Reynolds**, long-time pacifist and supporter of Puerto Rican sovereignty*

This quote is from the foreward from Ruth Reynold's ***Campus In Bondage***, Research Foundation of the City University of New York (1989). For more information, contact: Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, New York NY 10021.

The Church Connection:
The Christian Role in Colonizing and Decolonizing Puerto Rico

by Rev. Alfonso Román

When the North American troops arrived in Puerto Rico in July 1898, Puerto Rico was a colony of Spain, and the Catholic church was very well integrated into the life of the poor. The elite of the country was also part of the elite of the Catholic church, and that integration enabled certain divisions to be maintained. The poor were the majority of the people of the island, but the dominant elite controlled the commerce and the agricultural economy. The country was very poor and very rural. The Catholic church, however, was not involved in what was happening at the rural level and was a more semi-urban institution. It served the poor in a few traditional activities during Easter and Christmas, but there was not much ongoing concern. The church was part of the colonial process in keeping the masses submissive.

> ***As humanity prepares to commemorate the historic event of 500 years ago – the arrival of Europeans in America – conscious Puerto Ricans see in the festivals a reminder of almost 500 years of colonialism, struggle, and resistance. This could lead us to despair, but it does not. Hope, strength, and joy arise in the midst of the struggle itself.***
>
> **Rev. Eunice Santana,**
> **General Coordinator, PRISA**

When U.S. soldiers came to the island, they were followed by Protestant missionaries. In the United States, there was already a mentality developed regarding its imperialistic role in the world, and the church supported that approach. Both Catholic and Protestant churches supported colonial status. Before the U.S. invasion , churches had already met to discuss going to the Spanish territories—Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines. Evangelizing was part of the missionary approach.

By 1901, there were already missionaries on the island. They divided the island up geographically. Decisions about who would get which piece were made in the United States. The Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and what are now called the Disciples of Christ each took a portion. That was typical of what was done during those years. It was done not only in Puerto Rico, but also in Mexico, Central America, and throughout Latin America. The idea was to penetrate and change the total life of each country.

Immediately after the coming of the troops, there was an effort to penetrate the economy and change it as fast as possible. There was a devaluation of the currency. There was also an attempt to grab land. Many of the business people who came were connected with the churches. For example, I was born in Fajardo. The Fajardo Sugar Company was one of the strongest corporations to control the island in the first forty years of U.S. presence. I remember that the church I belonged to was very close to the sugar mills and to the company.

The new Protestant missionaries emphasized that there was a difference between themselves and the "old ways"— that being Catholic was something of the past. If you wanted to be something better, then you had to be Protestant. I was born a Protestant, and I used to go to what we called the Summer Bible School, which was run for two weeks in July. When we entered, the first thing we did in the morning was to pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States, to the Bible, and to the Christian flag. In my mind therefore, all of those things were connected.

Under the Catholic doctrine, people worked, but they also enjoyed life. There was no sense of progress, because the class distinction was so clear: people who were born poor would always stay poor, and people who were born rich would stay rich. The American model gave you the impression that you could "make it" if you worked hard.

During the 1930's, when the economy of the island was in very bad shape, two figures appeared in our history: Luis Muñoz Marín and Pedro Albizu Campos. Muñoz was able to go to the rural areas and convince people that they should vote for him and that he would bring "bread, land and liberty." He also attracted many Protestant

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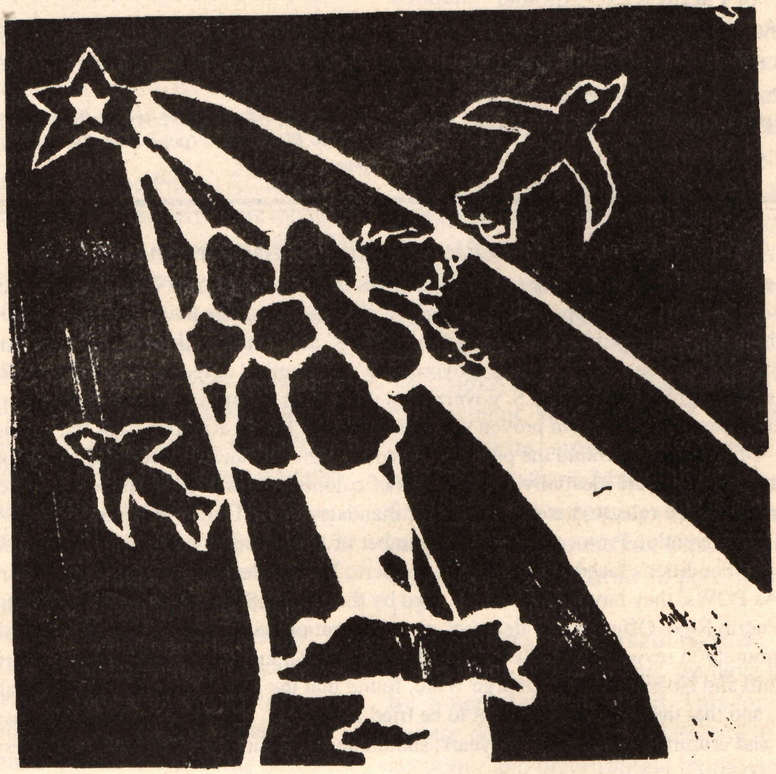
Rev. Alfonso Román was the founding coordinator of the National Ecumenical Movement of Puerto Rico (PRISA). The former co-chair of the National Council of the Churches of Christ Racial Justice Working Group, he currently serves as Assistant to the President at Bloomfield College in New Jersey. An ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, he is also chairperson of the U.C.C.'s Council for Hispanic Ministries.

leaders who felt that his proposals were similar to the ideas of change that the church was preaching. Some Protestants did see independence as an option, but they believed that this freedom would be granted by the U.S. Albizu took a different position; he tried to convince the people that there was no possibility that the U.S. would be so generous.

A core of Protestants in Muñoz' party were very powerful, and helped to provide the basis for keeping the connection with the U.S. They were trained in the churches to feel that the U.S. was a political and economic model. This helped to rationalize the industrialization of the island. For example, Senator Hipolito Marcal, who was very close to Muñoz, controlled the labor movement, the Masons' movement, and the Protestant movement. He was the president of the Evangelical Council, the president of the Masons, and also the president of the Labor Council.



Yesi Oquendo

During the 1940's, a movement of pentecostal missionaries came. In the forty-year period before their arrival, the Protestants were able to grow and become middle class, and, as stated, part of the ruling elite. They became more Americanized, as the majority of poor Puerto Ricans held on to their traditional Spanish values.

The Pentecostals came to the island when the process of industrialization was intensifying. Many people living in rural areas were dislocated. Some moved to the urban centers. Others were just "transplanted" to the United States. In the midst of these tumultuous changes, the pentecostal missionaries came along with the message that what happens in this world doesn't matter. All that matters is that Christ will soon be coming. The disruptions, the explained, were simply symbols of His holy arrival.

This new religious movement provided a sense of community in the midst of a society that was changing very quickly. The worship was very energetic and emotional, using guitars and traditional music. A kind of catharsis was created, which helped some people deal with the changes. Those who were afraid and were looking for a sense of stability could turn to this intense movement. As the Protestants in the ruling groups were focusing on industrialization and the transition of Puerto Rico to a U.S. "commonwealth," and the Nationalist Party was stepping up resistance to the U.S., these Pentacostals were telling people to forget politics altogether.

Leaders in the pentecostal movement have become very anti-liberation, as they see liberation as something connected with communism and the devil. Today, those pentecostals can easily call a meeting that will bring out 250,000 people, a significant figure when you consider that the last gubernatorial election was won by a margin of 56,000 votes. The political leaders are, of course, very attentive to the pentecostal sector of the Protestant church. As they have grown, they have also become more political. With their roots directly taken from the U.S. religious right, they now constitute the major grouping in support of assimilation and statehood.

It is very difficult to deal with the status of Puerto Rico from the church perspective. For ironically, the mainstream Protestant churches in the U.S. are now more critical of colonialism in Puerto Rico than this large island-based conservative religious group. Self-determination cannot easily be accomplished because the people's mentality has been trained to see the relationship of dependence as impossible to break.

On the positive side, there are progressive religious groups that have developed in Puerto Rico. During the 1960s, when the University of Puerto Rico was going through turmoil similar to what was happening in the U.S., some Puerto Rican Protestant leaders were influenced by liberation theology. We felt compelled to make changes in Puerto Rico and to be involved in the anti-colonial movement. The core of people who became active in this period went on to develop the National Ecumenical Movement of Puerto Rico (PRISA). The Episcopal church helped to establish PRISA and also established Misión Industrial. While PRISA brings clergy and lay people together with support and training for social change, *You will not find a more extreme case of colonialism in these past 500 years than that of Puerto Rico.*

Ramsey Clark,
Former U.S. Attorney General
Speaking before U.N. Decolonization Committee (1989)

Misión Industrial provides information about the industrial and economic complexities of Puerto Rico. Another group, El Proyecto Caribeño de Justicia y Paz, was founded by the Quakers to organize against militarism.

As the conditions in Puerto Rico have changed, PRISA has also changed. PRISA is now facilitating the development of local groups who are fighting for their rights. For example, there's a group of people who are trying to stop the development of a tourist complex. PRISA helped in the initial organizing of that group, so that people on the local level can now begin to challenge the situation on their own. PRISA has also been active in Vieques, where they have supported a group of fishing people who were fighting against the U.S. military's take-over of their land. They are also involved in challenging a pharmaceutical complex that is dumping toxic waste. PRISA is very involved in supporting the labor movement. They produce documents analyzing events on the island from a Christian, liberation theology perspective. ★

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* *National Ecumenical Movement (PRISA), P.O.B. 2448, Bayamon, Puerto Rico, 00621 (produces a regular newsletter in Spanish,* ***De PRISA****)*
* *Conferencia Bautista de la Paz, Barrio Farallon R-3059, Cayey, Puerto Rico, 00633 (analysis in Spanish from a Christian nonviolence perspective)*

The Case of the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and POWs

19 Puerto Rican men and women are presently serving sentences ranging from 15 to 90 years, scattered in prisons throughout the U.S. Far from families, friends and supporters, the majority of these prisoners have been sentenced for crimes involving no specific actions. Most have been charged with "seditious conspiracy" to overthrow the U.S. government, simply because they were involved in organized activities opposing U.S. government intervention in the affairs of Puerto Rico. Several have also been charged with membership in groups that the U.S. government regards as terrorist, despite the fact that actual acts of "terrorism" have, in almost all cases, neither been proven nor even charged. Puerto Ricans across the political spectrum regard these prisoners as patriots. United efforts around the prisoners have brought together elected officials, religious leaders, labor unions and community groups. Seen as the most obvious symbols of colonial repression, the prisoners have been supported by campaigns calling for their immediate release, based on the clear mandates of the United Nations decolonization guidelines.

Citing the 1949 Geneva Convention Protocols I and II, a number of the prisoners have declared themselves "Prisoners of War," pointing to the war-like conditions faced by the people of Puerto Rico under colonialism and to their own positions as anti-colonial combatants. As POWs, they have refused to be tried by the United States Judicial system, which includes the U.S.-run English-only court in Puerto Rico. Offering no "defense" or collaboration with their trials in the U.S., these prisoners call on the international legal community to review their cases and offer support. An independent International Tribunal, made up of British Lord Anthony Gifford and Nobel Laureate George Wald, found that the Puerto Ricans met the legally recognized conditions for POW status, and that they were entitled not to be tried in the U.S. "These prisoners," they asserted, "who have been illegally incarcerated and criminalized for over 10 years, should be unconditionally released or, at very least, transferred to a neutral country."

The U.S. government has systematically imposed severe conditions designed to break the prisoners' spirits, drawing condemnations by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International. These conditions include inhumane seclusion in control units, 23 hour-a-day lockdown, no visits, curtailment of correspondence and telephone privileges, denial of appropriate medical treatment, sexual harassment of female prisoners through cavity searches by male guards, and harassment of family, friends and legal advisors. One of the most notorious cases of cruel and inhuman treatment occurred to Alejandrina Torres, a former secretary at Chicago's First Congregational Church (UCC). Alejandrina was imprisoned in the Lexington Control Unit, where she was not permitted to participate in recreational activities or to attend religious services. In 1984, following a visit by her daughter and her husband, Rev. Jose Torres, and following the one strip search generally required after such visits, a male guard brutally assaulted her and forced her to submit to a second strip search. Though the Lexington Unit was closed following a massive educational campaign, Alejandrina remains in prison, having suffered a heart attack due to the trauma of her ordeal. The Lexington Campaign shows, however, that with popular education and action, positive change can occur.

- Ofensiva '92, Apartado Postal 20190, Rio Piedras Puerto Rico 00928, is the coordinating body in Puerto Rico supporting the political prisoners and POWs.
- The National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican POWs, P.O.B. 476698, Chicago, IL 60647, is a U.S.-based group which publishes the bilingual monthly ***Libertad*** and coordinates various educational campaigns.
- Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project, 2120 Lincoln Street, Evanston IL 60201, is a unit of the National Council of Churches which mobilizes faith-based support. ***Can't Jail the Spirit***, co-published by the Project, can be ordered for $16 from E. Youniss, c/o 59 E. Van Buren #1400, Chicago, IL 60605.
- The Unitary Committee Against Repression (CUCRE), P.O.B. 20190, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00928, publishes ***Blanco Y Negro*** (in Spanish).

United Church of Christ 1991 General Synod

Resolution for the Self-Determination of Puerto Rico and Amnesty for Prisoners of Conscience

The following resolution was passed at the 1991 General Synod meeting of the United Church of Christ:

The Scriptures inform us that Christ had a concern and an interest for those who were in captivity and imprisoned. This concern is reflected in the beginning of His public ministry, where in Luke 4:16-20 he says that He is the One who has come to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed.

The Scriptures commit us to bring to your attention the cry for justice and mercy from our Puerto Rican prisoners who are subjected to discriminatory treatment from the prison officials. Because we are called by Christ to bring the good news to the captives and to preach release to the oppressed, we have a responsibility to improve the prison conditions of the Puerto Rican prisoners and to eliminate the colonial condition of the Puerto Rican people.

WHEREAS, we as Christians are called to follow the mandates of Scripture and to work for justice wherever injustice is found, and

WHEREAS, the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations has since 1972 recognized that Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, and

WHEREAS, the United Nations has declared this the decade to end colonialism, and

WHEREAS, Puerto Rico is one of the last remaining colonial possessions in the world, and

WHEREAS, the United States is one of the few who refuse to recognize that Puerto Rico is its colony, and

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rican people have never been consulted as to their status since the 1898 invasion of Puerto Rico by the United States, and

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rican people have suffered under colonization for 498 years, and

WHEREAS, 19 Puerto Rican women and men whose only crime has been to advocate the cause of Puerto Rico's independence have been tried unjustly, sentenced, jailed, and denied the basic human rights afforded common prisoners, and

WHEREAS, 14 of the Puerto Ricans have invoked the international law status of Prisoners of War taking refuge in the Geneva Convention of 1949 and resulting Protocols adopted by the United Nations, and

WHEREAS, the Freedom Now! campaign is working toward the freedom of the prisoners of conscience, and

WHEREAS, the colonial situation of Puerto Rico is dehumanizing and immoral,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED,
That the United Church of Christ demand that President Bush and the Congress undertake a process for Puerto Ricans to achieve self-determination and, as a gesture of good will, take the following steps, which are part of any legitimate process of self-determination:

- grant immediate and unconditional amnesty to all Puerto Rican prisoners of conscience (as defined by Amnesty International) and political prisoners;
- grant amnesty to those advocates of independence in exile;
- cease prosecution and persecution of advocates of independence.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,
That the United Church of Christ be involved in the justice work in the following areas:

- support the Freedom Now! campaign through the use of petitions and presence and support during trials of advocates of independence;
- engage in an educational campaign on issues of Puerto Rico;
- urge local churches to adopt a prisoner of conscience;
- encourage local church members to write to their national representatives.

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* *For further information about denominational work within U.S. churches, contact Interfaith Prisoner of Conscience Project, 2120 Lincoln Street, Evanston, IL 60201, (708) 328-1543.*

* *Freedom Now Network – East Coast, 138 Jefferson Street, Hartford, CT 06106, coordinates work to free all U.S. political prisoners and POW's.*

Christianity, Nonviolence, and the Need for Self-Determination

by Lourdes B. García

Any attempts to discuss the character of Puerto Rico's anti-colonial struggle must be placed within the context of the struggle for self-determination and sovereignty that Latin America and the Caribbean have been waging for the past 500 years. The role that the U.S. has played within the last 150 years must also be considered.

One of the most frustrating and bewildering legacies the people of Puerto Rico have had to contend with throughout the last 500 years is the mixed message of Christian salvation and ruthless economic exploitation. The oppressed have repeatedly been told by the church that salvation lies in their capacity to passively accept their fate and turn the other cheek. The oppressors, however, have considered themselves exempt from this mandate, preferring instead to measure their proximity to heaven by their accumulation of power and wealth here on earth. Violent clashes between the two have been and apparently will continue to be inevitable unless the structures of economic exploitation and dependency are challenged and changed.

The labor movement, the Puerto Rican independence movement, and other social activists have engaged in numerous legal activities such as strikes, demonstrations, public forums, and petitioning of public officials in an attempt to address the reality described above. Yet time and again the responses of both the colonial and the U.S. governments have been violent:

- Unions like the UTIER (irrigation and electrical workers) have been and are currently being accused of industrial sabotage during negotiations, with no evidence provided to substantiate such devastating charges.
- In 1982, then Governor Romero Barceló ordered the National Guard to bulldoze the community known as Villa Sin Miedo, established by squatters on idle government-owned lands.
- The island of Vieques is subjected every year to U.S. naval maneuvers, which include the shelling of the tiny island inhabited by 10,000 Puerto Ricans.
- At present, hearings are being conducted regarding the case of Cerro Maravilla, in which two independentistas were set up and brutally murdered by government agents in 1978, as part of a government conspiracy to frame and undermine the independence movement.
- On August 30, 1985, over 300 FBI agents and members of the U.S. Special Forces armed with automatic weapons invaded the homes of dozens of student activists and trade unionists. There were no orders of arrest nor was the Puerto Rican government informed of this action.

It is not difficult to imagine, therefore, why a call for nonviolence put forth by some North American Christians is hard to take. What challenges are North American Christians prepared to confront regarding the power structures of their society that operate in Puerto Rico? Do North American Christians see their role as "advising" or "accompanying" the people of Puerto Rico? The role of "advisor" would be but another manifestation of colonial imposition, with possibly quite a few strings attached. The role of "companion," on the other hand, is one in which both are committed to stand by one another in the struggle for justice. What is essential is that the direction for a free Puerto Rico come from the island not from the "mainland."

The role of "companion" would also demand that North American churches, the same ones who, prior to the U.S. invasion, carved up the island and sent missionaries to "evangelize" the already-Christian people, reflect upon their own colonial relations with the churches of Puerto Rico. The success of this type of reflection can be measured by the willingness of the churches to engage in a decolonization process with the churches of Puerto Rico, which will cut the economic and spiritual umbilical cord that binds the churches of the island to the "mainland." Once this colonial relationship had ended, the churches of Puerto Rico will be forced to define themselves in relation to their people, rather than to block grants or program priorities established by U.S. churches. Another effect this reflection will have is that Puerto Rico will finally be placed and addressed within its natural context, the Latin American and Caribbean region, rather than as part of "domestic" program units that impose upon Puerto Ricans U.S. issues and concerns.

The search for a nonviolent path to independence will be futile if the Puerto Rican and North American churches do not engage in separate and collective reflections, repentance, and renovation. ★

* *Women's Workshop In The Americas, 860 Riverside Drive suite 6-B, New York, NY 10032*

* *U.S./P.R. Solidarity Network, G.P.O. Box 1565, New York, NY 10001 (publishes bilingual quarterly* ***Puerto Rico Update****)*

Lourdes B. García is an executive member of the Venceremos Brigade, and is active with the Womern's Workshop in the Americas. A member of the United Church of Christ, she is on the staff of the United Church Board for World Ministries. She is also a member of TFLAC, and the U.S.-Puerto Rico Solidarity Network.

Some Facts About Puerto Rico

Official Name: Free Associated State of Puerto Rico (ELA), Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

Area: 34,423 square miles

Population: Projections for the year 2005 (Planning Board of Puerto Rico)
Total: 3,728,727
Males: 1,743,594, Median Age, males: 31.2
Females: 1,986,133 Median Age, females: 35.3
Note: 2.6 million have migrated to the U.S. since the 1940s

Political Division:
8 senatorial districts
40 representative districts
78 municipalities, including the capital
Republican form of government: executive, legislative, and judicial branches
Two spheres of government: free associated state and federal

Currency: U.S. dollar

Language: Official language is Spanish, but English is required in all federal matters

Government: The governor, who exercises executive power, is elected every four years and names his or her cabinet. Judicial system with Supreme Court, Superior Court, District Courts, and municipal judges. A resident delegation in Washington, with a voice but no vote, is elected every four years.

The U.S. federal government has control over more than 30 fundamental aspects of Puerto Rican life: foreign relations; control of air, land and sea; immigration and emigration; currency; maritime laws; military service; tariffs and customs; declaration of war; nationality and citizenship; constitutionality of laws, jurisdictions and legal procedures; treaties; foreign commerce; military bases; army, navy and air force; radio and television, communications; agriculture; mining and minerals; highways; postal system; social security; etc. The personnel of the Federal District Court are named by the president of the U.S. The Federal Court has final authority over the ELA.

Education: Constitutional right of education, with obligatory free primary and secondary education. More than 70,000 children in primary and secondary grades; more than 10 universities and private colleges; numerous private elementary schools. University of Puerto Rico of the ELA. More than 20,000 teachers.

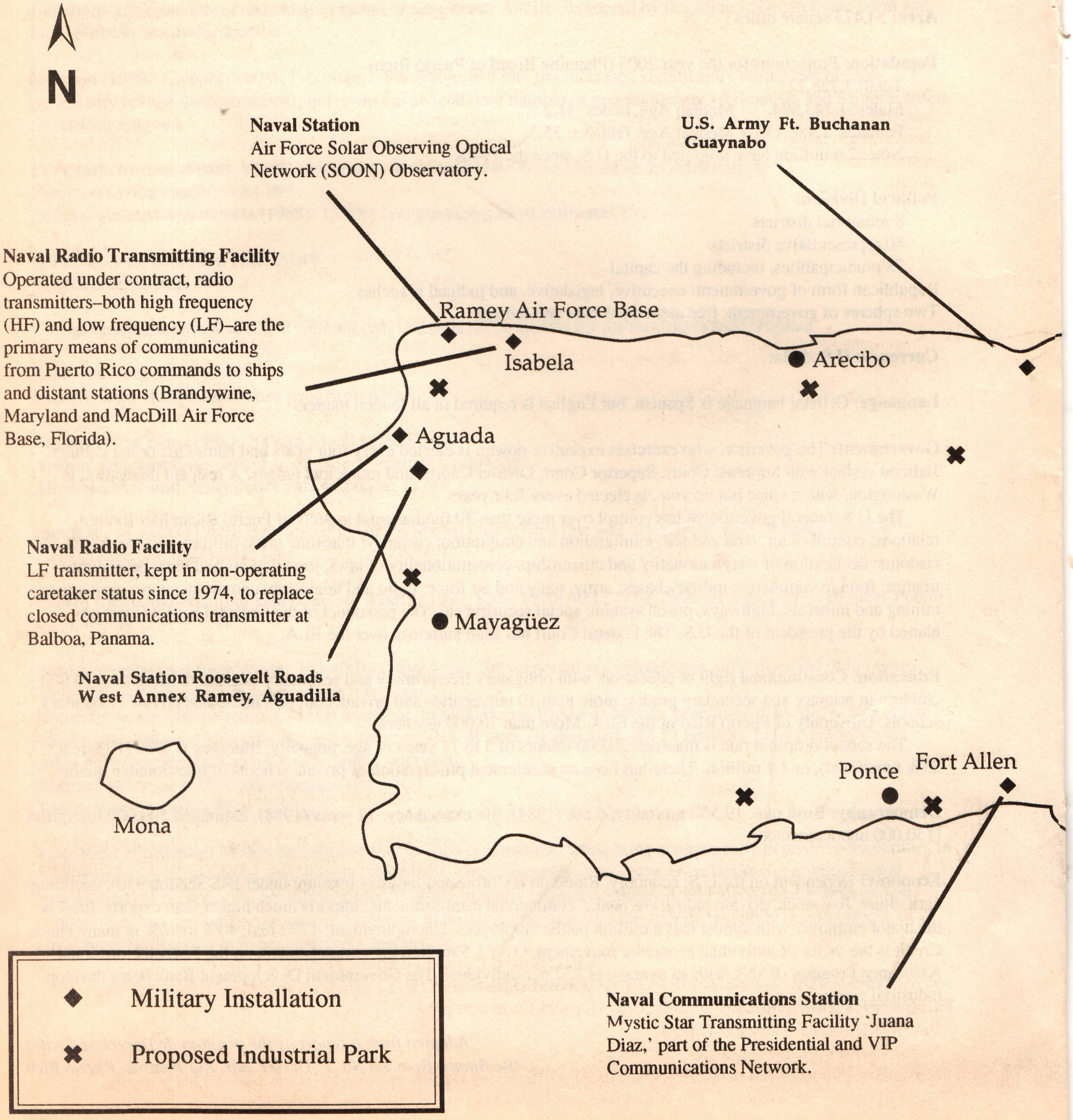
The school drop-out rate is massive: 20,000 minors of 5 to 17 years of age, annually. Illiteracy is 33% (10% real, 23% functional), or 1.1 million. There has been an accelerated proliferation of private schools of questionable quality.

Demography: Birth rate: 19.5%; mortality: 6.6% (1984); life expectancy: 74 years (1984). Estimated 500,000 foreigners (150,000 undocumented).

Economy: Dependent on the U.S. economy. Based on tax-protected industry (exempt under IRS Section 936), declining agriculture, live stock, private industries, banks, commercial establishments; imports much higher than exports. ELA is the major employer with almost half a million public employees. Unemployment: 17%; real, 40% to 90% in many cities. Credit is the factor of individual economic movement. Over 1.5 million persons dependent on the Federal Nutritional Assistance Program (PAN), with an average of $32 per individual. The Government Development Bank helps develop industrial credit.

Adapted from a report by the Instituto de Derechos Civiles
Calle Blanco Romano No. 7, Third Floor, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

PUERTO RICO:
The Military Industrial Cost



Naval Station
Air Force Solar Observing Optical Network (SOON) Observatory.

U.S. Army Ft. Buchanan
Guaynabo

Naval Radio Transmitting Facility
Operated under contract, radio transmitters–both high frequency (HF) and low frequency (LF)–are the primary means of communicating from Puerto Rico commands to ships and distant stations (Brandywine, Maryland and MacDill Air Force Base, Florida).

Naval Radio Facility
LF transmitter, kept in non-operating caretaker status since 1974, to replace closed communications transmitter at Balboa, Panama.

Naval Station Roosevelt Roads
West Annex Ramey, Aguadilla

Naval Communications Station
Mystic Star Transmitting Facility 'Juana Diaz,' part of the Presidential and VIP Communications Network.

◆	Military Installation
✖	Proposed Industrial Park

Naval Radio Receiving Facility
Primary entry point for fleet communications entering Puerto Rico, and for HF radio messages from Davidsonville, Maryland and MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

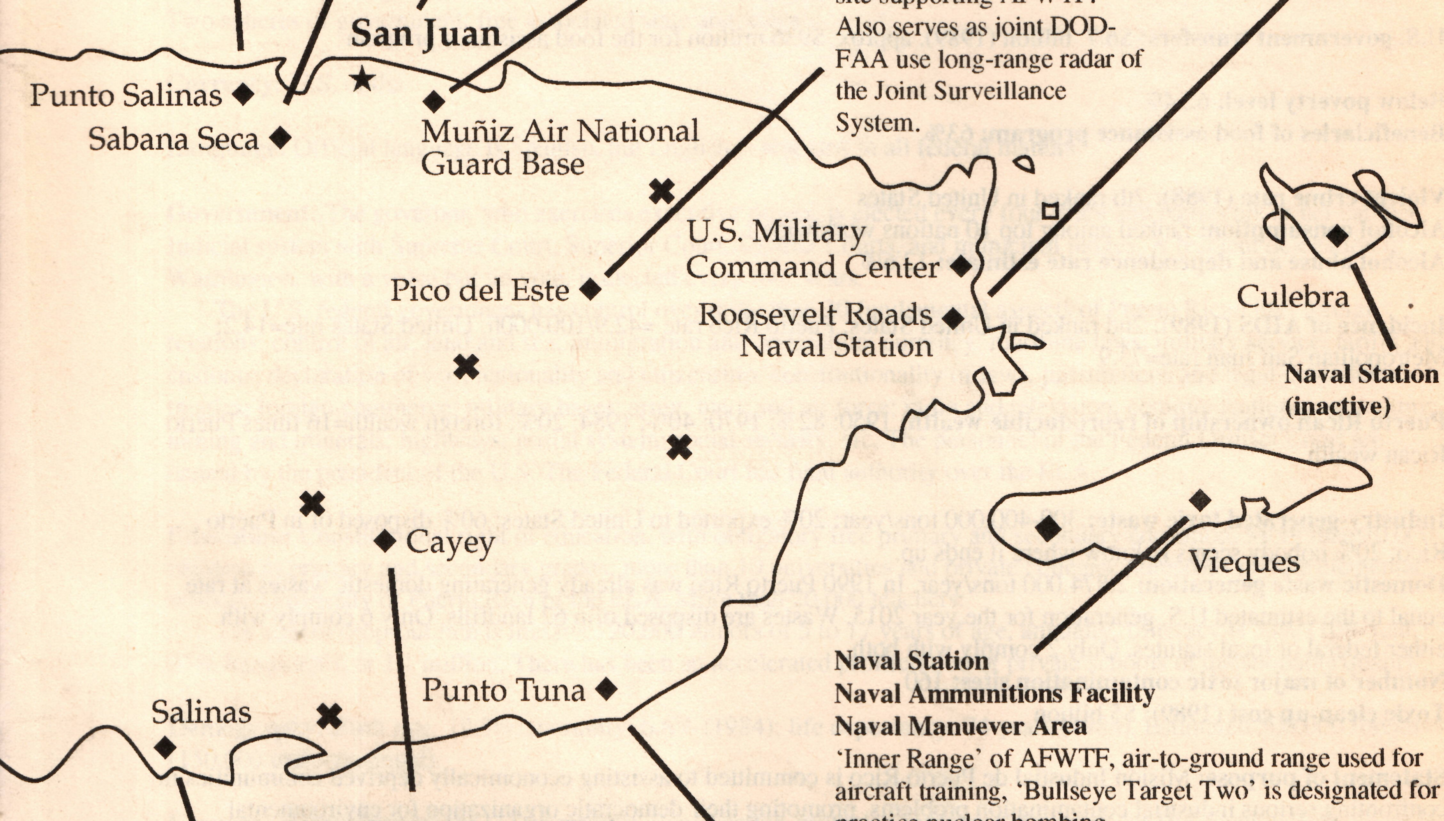
Naval Station
U.S. Naval Forces Headquarters in the Caribbean, including nuclear command; possible contingency HQ for ballistic missile submarine operations. Fleet Air Caribbean: command of aircraft, aircraft carrier, and anti-submarine operations. Former HQ for Antilles Defense Command (sub-unified command of LANTCOM), replaced by U.S. forces. Caribbean Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility (AFWTF): weapons training range consisting of 200,000 square miles of sea area, supporting ship and submarine acceptance trials, anti-submarine training (ASROC), and large-scale naval training. Marine barracks. Contingency role of guarding nuclear weapons. AUW Branch, Naval Station: inactive nuclear weapons storage complex. P-3C Orion aircraft deployments to Puerto Rico.

Radar Station
Puerto Rican Air National Guard radar, staffed 24 hours a day. Serves as an early-warning radar for Puerto Rico.

Coast Guard Facility (Planned)
Differential OMEGA radio/navigation remote monitoring facility.

Air National Guard Base
156th Tactical Fighter Group (Puerto Rico Air National Guard). A-7D nuclear-capable aircraft.

Naval Station
Radar and communications site supporting AFWTF. Also serves as joint DOD-FAA use long-range radar of the Joint Surveillance System.


San Juan
Punto Salinas
Sabana Seca
Muñiz Air National Guard Base
U.S. Military Command Center
Pico del Este
Roosevelt Roads Naval Station
Culebra
Cayey
Vieques
Punto Tuna
Salinas

Naval Station (inactive)

Naval Station
Naval Ammunitions Facility
Naval Manuever Area
'Inner Range' of AFWTF, air-to-ground range used for aircraft training, 'Bullseye Target Two' is designated for practice nuclear bombing.

Naval Communications Station
COMSTAT and INTELSAT transmitters.

Coast Guard Communications Facility (Planned)
Updated Differential OMEGA Radio Navigation Facility, coverage in Eastern Caribbean only.

U.S. Army Camp Santiago
Puerto Rico Army National Guard
Naval Communications Station
Mystic Star Control Console and Receiver Facility, part of the Presidential and VIP Communications Network. The FBI trains troops from Central America and the Caribbean at the Caribbean Police School.

More Facts About Puerto Rico

Location: The easternmost and smallest island of the Greater Antilles, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the north and the Caribbean Sea in the south.

Religion (1990): Catholic – 87%, Protestant – 9% (Protestant rate has increased significantly during this decade, particularly revival denominations); unknown but a significant number of practitioners of spiritualism and Santeria based on African religions.

Per capita income (1988): $5,157 (lower than the poorest state in the United States, Mississippi)
Personal savings rate: minus 10%
Official unemployment rate (1988): 15.9%; **real unemployment estimate:** 30%

Official school desertion rate: 20.4%
Unofficial estimate: 50%

U.S. government transfers: $6.7 billion (1989), approx. $936 million for the food assistance program

Below poverty level: 62.4%
Beneficiaries of food assistance program: 63%

Violent crime rate (1988): 7th ranked in United States
Alcohol consumption: ranked among top 10 nations worldwide
Alcohol abuse and dependence rate estimate: 12.6%

Incidence of AIDS (1989): 2nd ranked in United States; Puerto Rico rate =42.9/100,000h; United States rate=14.2; Metropolitan San Juan rate=73.9

Puerto Rican ownership of reproducible wealth: 1950: 82%; 1970: 40%; 1984: 20%; foreign wealth=16 times Puerto Rican wealth

Industry-generated toxic waste: 300-400,000 tons/year; 20% exported to United States; 60% disposed of in Puerto Rico; 20% nobody seems to know where it ends up.
Domestic waste generation: 2,874,000 tons/year. In 1990 Puerto Rico was already generating domestic wastes at rate equal to the estimated U.S. generation for the year 2015. Wastes are disposed ofin 62 landfills. Only 6 comply with either federal or local statutes. Only 2 comply with both.
Number of major toxic contamination sites: 160
Toxic clean-up cost (1989): $5 billion

Statement of purpose: Misión Industial de Puerto Rico is committed to assisting economically deprived communities in confronting serious industrial contamination problems, promoting their democratic organization for environmental struggle and the preservation of natural resources. Only properly informed, educated, and ideologically independent communities can reverse erroneous and dangerous industialization strategies through participation in economic and environmental decision-making, based on popular needs.

Adapted from a report by Misión Industrial de Puerto Rico Inc.
P.O. Box 363728, San Juan, PR 00936-3728

Militarism, the Environment, and Grassroots Alternatives

an interview with Tintí Deya of the Taller de Arte y Cultural

When various U.S. federal agencies developed a plan to build military and industrial parks on private Puerto Rican land, the Taller de Arte y Cultural (Arts and Cultural Workshop) in rural Adjuntas was instrumental in discovering and publicizing the plan. Ms. Tintí Deya, a co-founder of the Taller, has also worked to design environmentally appropriate projects for grassroots development. This interview was conducted in early 1992 by TFLAC's Matt Meyer.

What are some of the military effects of colonialism, and how has militarism affected Puerto Rico?

First of all, one-third of our land belongs to the U.S. military forces, including three fourths of the island of Vieques, where the military practices two or three times a year. Also, we have one of the biggest U.S. military foreign bases here in Puerto Rico, which is Roosevelt Roads. Last year and the year before, U.S. military recruiters came about four times to the schools, making offers to the young people and trying to recruit them. Many people see it as an alternative to unemployment and the depressed economic situation.

I'm wondering about that recruitment, because a lot has been said about the connection between Puerto Ricans being made U.S. citizens and their availability to be drafted into the U.S. military.

Of course, during the First World War citizenship was given to Puerto Ricans, especially to recruit people for the war. And in all wars that the U.S. is involved in, there is a greater percentage of Puerto Ricans going compared to the percentage of North Americans.

We've also heard that there is a higher percentage of resistance, both G.I. resistance as well as draft resistance. For example, I know that in the early 1980s when registration for the draft was reinstituted, one of the highest percentages of nonregistration in all of the U.S. states and territories was in Puerto Rico. Maybe you can tell a little about that.

There are several groups who work around that issue. Many young people feel supported by lawyers and by groups who have called for demonstrations against war and recruitment. During the Gulf War, for example, many people resisted publicly, stating that they would face any consequences. Even when the war was over, they remained firm in their position.

Perhaps you could speak about some of the environmental and ecological effects of militarism. Maybe you could explain what the 2020 Plan was.

The 2020 Plan was a military-industrial reorganization plan that was to be executed in Puerto Rico between 1980 and 2020. It came after the failure of the economic strategy that was taking place in Puerto Rico, based especially on oil. U.S. corporations started planning about Puerto Rico in a more integrated way. Various U.S. federal agencies carried out studies about how the land could be restructured and "redeveloped." They divided the island into six production areas. For example, there would be no agriculture for the sector of the island where the company planned a mining zone.

Control of population was also emphasized, because of the need for relocation around the building of industrial parks. Eleven industrial parks were planned, with infrastructure to support all these plans, including a factory to produce military uniforms. The 2020 Plan also included enlarging the land area used by the U.S. military. One and a half years ago, when the U.S. government was preparing to carry out military exercises across 26,000 acres in the center of the island, people began to protest and we were able to force them to stop it.

In January 1992, over fifteen schools located near industrial parks were affected by toxic wastes. There is an area in Mayagüez, a big city on the west coast, where there is an industrial park. Many women in that area have given birth to children with birth defects. The industries and the government say that the women are alarmist and hysterical. But those women and children are suffering now! Schools have had to close and children have had to move to other schools. Those affected, including teachers and many staff people, have been taken to the hospitals.

Tintí Deya is a co-founder of the Taller de Arte y Cultural in Adjuntas, Puerto Rico. She is a leading advocate of indigenous environmental rights, and has written and spoken extensively on the subjects of militarism, ecology and the impact of colonialism.

Could you describe some of your programs for economic alternatives?

We are developing projects for economic independence. For example, we are planting lettuce in hydroponics to support our Taller. We have bought a house, and we have many activities there including a library, classes, and workshops. We are developing a farm and a camping area. We have right now four small houses where people can stay, help with the work, and keep in touch with nature. We are planting basic foodstuffs, so that people who stay there can get their food from the farm.

Another economic project of ours is El Café Madre Isla. We are producing coffee of great quality, and we are selling it locally and in the U.S. The idea is to show people that there are alternatives, and that with hard work we *can* become less dependent.

Is the hope that, through small farms and through agricultural models, more people will begin producing for themselves rather than importing foods and buying from the outside?

Yes, and if they produce, they can also sell those things. We also have fish; we have a small lake here. We have fish and we have hens. It's a strong beginning.

Our hydroponics project involves the planting of lettuce in tubes of water. The tubes have many holes and in each hole you put foam with a lettuce seed. Every seven minutes water runs through those tubes with nutrients. This way we can produce a new crop each month.

It is a simple and healthy way to grow food. It's healthier because you don't have to irrigate it. You don't have to use herbicides.

Alone, it may not be possible for Puerto Rico to feed itself. But we can produce many things that can be exchanged. First, however, we have to transform people. We have to educate them about the many possibilities for survival. There are more and more organizations in grassroots communities which work for self-sufficiency. I think that slowly, but soon, the mentality of people will change. And that's a real sign of hope. ★

Environmental Impact?

In 1992 it was revealed in Puerto Rico's House of Representatives that the U.S. Department of Agriculture had planned to conduct experiments with controversial herbicides on a privately owned coca plantation. "As we are basically a territory of the U.S.," commented Jorge Fernández, a community organizer with Misión Industrial, "they just decided to do it and didn't ask us about our opinion. The Department of Agriculture has a very strange theory. They said they didn't need an environmental-impact statement because the testing was to be done on less than five acres."

Sandra Marquardt, the Pesticide Information Coordinator of Greenpeace, added, "I really think that it's basically nutty for them to go on with any discussion of this. It's such an ecologically sensitive area down there. In our typical fashion, we go in with all guns blazing, this time the guns being pesticide spray guns."

Immerse Yourself in Puerto Rico!

The intimate setting of the Madre Isla Camp in Adjuntas, Puerto Rico offers an opportunity to interact directly with Puerto Ricans from many sectors of the progressive movement. The new work brigades, set up in conjunction with the Puerto Rican Cultural Centers, will focus on such topics as resistance to the continuing militarization of the island by U.S. forces, the unchecked dumping of toxic waste by U.S. corporations, the daily violence of unemployment, and the dehumanization of colonialism that works to deny people their vision of meaningful alternatives.

The two-week brigades will include:

- opportunities to work in one of the agricultural projects;
- political presentations and discussions involving members of the labor, women's, environmental, student, health, and education movements.
- excursions to historical sites, including the island of Vieques; El Yunque, one of the last remaining rain forests in the Caribbean; Taino ceremonial centers, caves, and museums; Loíza Aldea, center of Afro-Puerto Rican culture; and Old San Juan;
- lodging in newly constructed cabins;
- Spanish/English interpreting services;
- programs prepared according to special interest groups.

For more information, contact the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, 1671 North Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 342-8023.

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* _Taller de Arte y Cultura, Apartado 704, Adjuntas, Puerto Rico, 00601 (Café Madre Isla coffee is available, along with materials in Spanish about their work)_

* _Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace, P.O.B. 21226, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, 00928 (a wide variety of booklets and materials on militarism, war toys, the draft and the environment are avialable in English and Spanish)_

* _Servicios Cientificos y Tecnicos, Neftali García Martinez, Cond. El Centro 1, Oficina 607, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, 00918 (material in Spanish focusing on the environment)_

* _**Vieques Update**, G.P.O. Box 1565, New York, NY 10001 (Bilingual newsletter)_

Puerto Rican Women

and the Process of Self-Determination

by Dr. Alice Colón

Puerto Rico has been presented as the shining star of the Caribbean, showcase of economic development and electoral democracy. The struggles of Puerto Rican women have somewhat improved our legal and economic status relative to men. If we are to have a complete picture, however, of our present political and economic status, then we must stress the problems and constraints which colonialism imposes, constraints which impinge on our self-determination.

Women represent a majority of the Puerto Rican population, 52 percent of the voters. Still, we represent a majority whose particular needs are not considered in political discussions except in a manipulative manner. The limits to the exercise of women's power as voters become manifest when one observes that by 1988 only four senators, three representatives, and four mayors were women. Without a particular voice and excluded from the official "public" spheres of political influence, women have nevertheless been central in developmental strategies that have been presented as models for the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America. These strategies have not resulted in an equitable society among men and women. They have actually built upon women's subordination: upon the control of our bodies, our movement, and our labor. The economic, political, and population policies in Puerto Rico have maintained women in a situation of dependency not only on men, but on the state. This presents a difficult situation in which to make any status decision, and the status options (enhanced commonwealth, statehood, or independence) would each have to consider women's particular problems if a profound decolonization is to be promoted.

Puerto Rican Women Remain the "Poorest Among the Poor"

Poor: because, despite successive strategies of economic development, only one-fourth of working age women are actually employed. Even with the shift to a service economy, with expanding "feminine" jobs and growing government employment, the labor market has been unable to absorb even higher-educated women. The decline in manufacturing has displaced less-educated women.

Poor: because, even when Puerto Rico's economy has depended on forced migration of Puerto Rican women, our movement to the United States has not resulted in any improvement of our economic status. At present, Puerto Rican women in the Middle Atlantic region of the U.S. have labor force participation rates around 30 percent, and female heads of family have poverty rates near 70 percent, close to those on the island. The colonial economic model has not solved the situation of Puerto Rican women either on the island or in the United States.

Poor : because, even those Puerto Rican women who *are* employed have low salaries and high rates of under-employment. Women remain concentrated in the lowest paid positions; around one-fourth of those employed are part-time workers. More than one-half of those employed full-time receive earnings below poverty level. The proportion of households with no earner (male or female) actually increased from 18 percent in 1970 to 30 percent in 1980.

Poor and overworked: because, with lower earnings and a rising cost of living, we have to face higher prices for water, electricity, food. This forces us to accept more intense domestic work, involvement in an informal economy and deteriorating employment conditions.

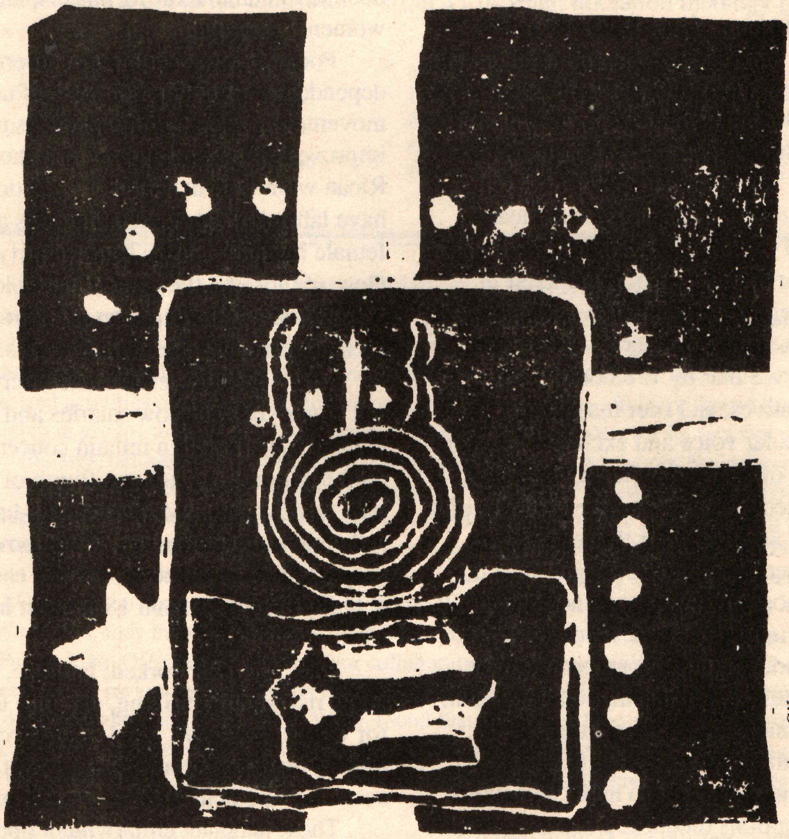
These stagnant employment opportunities have increased economic dependency, particularly among women. In 1980, 31 percent of all families and 50 percent of female-headed families in Puerto Rico received Social Security and public benefits. Over fifty percent of female-headed families received food stamps or checks for nutritional assistance. This poverty and dependency represent constraints on self-determination and a precarious situation on which to base decisions of political status.

Alice Colón, Ph.D., is a member of the Puerto Rican Organization of Working Women (ORMT). She is also affiliated with the Center for Women's Studies, Resources, and Services (CERES), a unit of the Social Science Research Center of the University of Puerto Rico.

This paper was originally presented at the forum "Puerto Rican Plebiscite: Alternative Voices." It is published here, with permission, for the first time.

Puerto Rican Women Are Subjected to Health Hazards and Control of Our Bodies

Puerto Rican women have had to face the reality that our health is not negotiable. We are beginning to face the fact that no salary can pay for the deterioration of our health. Perhaps the most dramatic example is the situation of the predominantly women workers at the Guanajibo export processing zone in Mayagüez. Hundreds of these workers have been exposed to toxic gases since 1983. Women fall with dizziness, suffer vomiting and headaches; they lose memory, sensory perception, and control over their limbs. Cases of neuropathy have been diagnosed and studies suggest permanent long-term damage to the peripheral and central nervous systems. After acknowledging the presence of toxic gases in the area, industrialists and the government have apparently returned to their original diagnosis of "collective stress syndrome" as an explanation for the symptoms. This fits their stereotypical image of "hysterical" women.


Ana Silva

The case of Guanajibo is not unique, nor are occupational hazards limited to manufacturing jobs. The same symptoms were found among workers—again women in the majority—at the Panasonic plant in Carolina. Health hazards have been documented in offices, libraries, schools and other public agencies.

Perhaps the best known effect of colonialism on the lives of Puerto Rican women has been the program of population control. In the 1940's, less-skilled women were encouraged to emigrate as a means of lowering fertility rates on the island. Post-war economic restructuring included the expansion of birth control, based on the assumption that poverty was exacerbated, if not generated, by an excessive population. That strategies of development were not generating enough economic opportunities and a more equitable distribution of resources was not even considered. Needless to say, the programs of forced population control were imposed upon women, irrespective of the extent to which access to contraception may have been desired as a reproductive right.

Interests of the pharmaceutical industries have far outweighed governmental concern about women's rights or health. There has been more propaganda for hormonal methods of contraception (like the pill) than for barrier methods (like the diaphragm). Barrier methods present fewer health hazards to women, but they require greater user education and imply greater user control. Sterilization, which ends all user control, became the most effective means of lowering fertility.

Puerto Rico has, in fact, been the showcase for population control experiments. In 1956, Dr. Gregory Pinkus began the first tests of the pill on hundreds of poor Puerto Rican women. These experiments would probably have been considered unacceptable in the United States. Many of the women suffered from strong side effects, and eight died from conditions linked to the use of this experimental version of the pill. Puerto Rican women continued to be used as guinea pigs for contraceptive technology like Emko, the IUD, and Depo Provera. Even as women in the United States have become more cautious with the use of hormonal methods, these products continue to be marketed as part of development packages to Third World countries.

Puerto Rico is probably best known as the country with the highest rate of sterilization in the world, a rate that has reached nearly 40 percent of women of childbearing age. Sterilization has been practiced with such a zeal in Puerto Rico that even those who look more positively to the success of this method as a means of birth control have had to accept the possible existence of abuse. It has been documented that women were misinformed about the irreversibility of the process, pressured to accept it under stressful conditions, or not even informed that they were going to be sterilized.

The control of women's bodies in Puerto Rico has more recently been found to include the abuse of medical technology, which results in a frequent "hidden malpractice." The excessive use of medical technology in the United States has been transferred to Puerto Rico's medical practice, including the increasing tendency toward surgical intervention. In the case of childbirth, it has meant a dramatic increase of caesarean sections. Puerto Rico has the highest proportion of caesarean births in the world, even higher than that of the United States, and this practice has now been shown to lead to increased sterilization.

In Conclusion: Puerto Rican Women Want Peace

Puerto Rican women's rights must be seen in the context of widespread personal, social, and economic subjugation. With degrading and diminishing stereotypes, women are often portrayed as inferior, passive, bound to the domestic sphere, irrational, animalized, and sex objects. Both subtle and brutal forms of psychological, physical, and sexual violence exist in the street, in the workplace, and in the home.

We have not even spoken of the conditions of political repression against women in prison, like Lolita Lebrón or, at present, Alejandrina Torres and Lucy Berríos. We have not spoken of the repression against poor women defending their right to a household and assassinated by the police during the process of eviction, like Adolfina Villanueva. We have not spoken of the repressive nature of an extremely militarized society, where women are at a risk of bearing children for war, or losing their husbands and brothers in battle. A militarized society drains resources that could be used for social services. A militarized society reinforces dependency, as it becomes the means of subsistence for people unable to find other employment. A militarized society reinforces authoritarianism and violence, disproportionately displayed against women.

Women, certainly, suffer these conditions, and we have historically expressed ourselves in favor of peace. It is in our interest, as well as in the interest of world peace, that Puerto Rico cease to be a military bastion.

Any process of decolonization must ultimately address these concerns if true self-determination is to be exercised. The formidable constraints currently placed on women's freedoms bar any possibility for meaningful decolonization. Women have resisted and will continue to resist these constraints. ★

* *The Puerto Rican Organization of Working Women (ORMT), P.O.B. 23136, U.P.R. Station, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00931(produces a regular publication in Spanish,* ***Mujeres En Marcha****)*

* *Center for Women's Studies, Resources, and Services, Facultad de Sciencias Sociales, Edificio Carmen Rivera Alvarado, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00931*

* ***Have You Seen La Nueva Mujer Puertorriquena?****, Editorial El Coqui, 1671 N. Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647, bilingual (also available are "Have You Seen" video, and* ***"La Operación,"*** *a video regarding sterilization abuse)*

* ***The Puerto Rican Woman,*** *by Edna Acosta-Belen (ed.), Praeger Publishers, 1986 (in English)*

Permanent Peace

"We are able to make permanent peace," once stated the great French statesman, Clemenceau. "We are able to eliminate all the causes of war. Have you calculated the price of this peace?

"If we are able to renounce war, if we are able to preserve peace, we shall have to renounce our empires and imperialism. You, the English, will have to leave India, for example. We, the French, will have to leave North Africa. You, the North Americans, Mr. President, will have to Leave Puerto Rico and the Philippines and Cuba alone.

"We shall be able to go to other countries as tourists, businessmen and travellers. We shall not be able to dominate trade routes or have spheres of influence."

Joseph Daniels, then U.S. Secretary of the Navy, personally testifying to this incident said: "Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson protested that they would not be able to reach such a decision, at least not as it was suggested."

"Then," said Clemenceau, rising from his seat and hitting the table with his hands, "Then it will not be possible to have permanent peace without other wars."

– taken from Bohemia, Havana (1950), regarding the peace negotiations of 1919, following World War One.

To Act Upon the World and Transform It:

Puerto Ricans in the U.S.A. and the Building of Decolonizing Institutions

by Professor José López

Historically, Puerto Ricans in the U.S. have faced exclusion from mainstream society as have Black people, Native Americans, and Mexicans. We are in a particular category, not only because of the color of our skin, but also because we have a different relationship to the dominant society. When we start to study the relationships between dominant and dominated in the U.S., we see that the European settlers view the people of color on this continent as inferior beings who were to produce for them.

It's an interesting situation: for example, if we look right now at the arguments that Patrick Buchanan makes, he says that the U.S. is headed toward separate realities. On the other hand, he wants to proclaim to the world that this is a predominantly European experience. Well, what happens, then, to the people of color? What is the project that the U.S. has for people of color within this society? It is definitively one of continual domination. That domination does not recognize that these people have a history, that these people have a common psychological makeup, that these people have created their own language and their own reality. So when we talk about Puerto Ricans in the U.S., we're talking about an internal colonial reality. Federalism in this country has meant the creation of a structure that brought in the white settlers, who went into the non-incorporated territories as citizens of the civil society.

Puerto Rico is presently a non-incorporated territory. The U.S. appears to have no real plans to bring Puerto Rico into the union, precisely because Puerto Rico does not have a white settler population. Some people may argue that neither did Hawaii, but of course, when you look at the history of Hawaii, you will see that the Hawaiian population was decimated. By 1959, when Hawaii was brought into the union, the native Hawaiian population was probably around 5, maybe at the most 10 percent of the population. Most of the settlers, while not Europeans, were from different Asian experiences who saw themselves as *not* Hawaiian and therefore came to a land that was part of the U.S. as they saw it. For them to be part of the system, the demand for citizenship and equal treatment as a federal state was necessary. For Native Hawaiians to this day, it has meant misery and destruction.

> ***The U.S. public underwrites the Puerto Rican people, while U.S. corporations shift profits through their Puerto Rican plants and back to the United States, tax free. The Puerto Rican family then buys its consumption needs, which consist for the most part of imported goods, shifting its public grant money back to the U.S. private sector.***
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> ***As its own economy decomposes, Puerto Rico becomes the revolving door for funds flowing from the American public back to the American private corporation and from the multinational company back to itself to avoid taxes. Puerto Rico has become a geographical laundry for corporate profits to avoid federal taxes. Meanwhile, these corporations employ only a token Puerto Rican work force. The rest of the island's people live peaceably on welfare or not so peaceably in the ghettos of America's industrial cities.***
>
> **Richard Weiskoff**
> **U.S. Economist**

When we look at the fact that Puerto Ricans have a homogeneous national and cultural experience, it becomes clear that the U.S. sees no real possibility of bringing Puerto Rico into the union. For the Puerto Ricans, what this means is a continual relationship of servitude. The

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U.S. Supreme Court, in the 1901 De Lima vs. Bidwell decision, declared that "Puerto Rico belongs to, but is not part of the U.S." For Puerto Ricans in U.S., what it has meant is that we have been transplanted from an external colonial situation to an internal colonial situation. When we come here, our standard of living does not improve. Our human condition does not improve. We have the highest unemployment rate. We are, according to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, among the poorest of the poor.

We were made citizens of the United States, and technically, Puerto Rican citizenship can be taken away. Puerto Ricans were made citizens with the sole purpose of having us serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. We are the cannon fodder of the U.S. Army, as we have been since 1917. Just recently in the war on Iraq, over 20,000 Puerto Ricans were sent to Kuwait to defend the self-determination of Kuwait, while these 20,000 people had no representation in the U.S. government. The highest tax imposed on any people, which is a blood tax, has been imposed on Puerto Ricans since 1917, and yet we have no representation. The Puerto Ricans in the U.S. were not even to be included in the plebiscite that was to take place on the status of the island.

Iveliss Collazo

The right of self-determination is a right that Puerto Rican people must exercise. And therefore, whatever Puerto Ricans choose, freely, is their right, but they must be able to exercise that human right. And if Puerto Ricans choose statehood or they choose something else, that is a right that they have. We believe if Puerto Ricans are freely allowed to exercise the right of self-determination, as the people of Namibia were allowed, that they will choose independence. But there are many problems in terms of having created a colonial mentality, and therefore it's going to be very difficult for many Puerto Ricans to make up their minds as to what they want. Nevertheless, the essential question here is for Puerto Ricans to exercise the right to self-determination. Everywhere. That means the right to decide their citizenship and the right to define themselves.

The building of Puerto Rican Cultural Centers in the five U.S. cities with large Puerto Rican populations—Chicago, New York City, Hartford, Philadelphia, and Boston—is part of our process of self-determination and decolonization. The centers are small spaces, in communities that are oppressed communities, communities that do not have much time to think about their realities or to act upon these realities. The centers are, in many ways, what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire would call the "communal workshops," where people come together to reflect and act upon their reality. The centers become experiments in real social change.

In the U.S. you have had many models of community organizing: people have organized along class lines, they have organized along single-issue politics. The model that we have chosen is one that is based on a decolonizing model. We believe that one of the first things colonized people must do is respect themselves, feel good about themselves, be active participants in their own lives.

When you look at Black-on-Black crime or Puerto Rican-on-Puerto Rican crime, when you look at the question of gangs, when you look at the question of drugs in our community, you can see that all of these are escapist tendencies. People see no exit out of this horrible situation. Some have called them the throw-away people. What our centers seek to do is to empower people, to empower our community: to think, to act, to talk, to *name* our institutions... to act upon the world and transform it.

We have developed many programs. Most of them are centered around culture and education. We have developed an alternative high school in Chicago that is aimed principally at students that the public schools have "thrown away," at the students who have rebelled against an educational system that does not meet their needs. The school has been running very successfully for nearly twenty years. We have a child care center. We have an adult evening literacy program. Literacy comes as a result of a need, not as a result of something that is imposed.

> ***The recent "yes/no" referendum on whether to vote on the status question was not a victory for statehood, and it is not a victory for those who want to keep the same system that exists now. What people are not talking about was that 41 percent of the voters did not vote. If you compare the 41 percent who did not vote against those who did vote, let's say the statehooders, then the people who won are the ones who didn't vote.***
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> **Guillermo Morales, 1992**
> **former prisoner of war living in exile in Cuba**

There are no sacred cows, there are no myths that cannot be studied and analyzed. For us, education must be a liberating process.

We have developed cultural programs, including a professional singing group. Morivi Productions has released its own recording. We have dancing groups. We have theater groups. We have a coffeehouse in which many cultural activities are produced.

We have a project to deal with the question of AIDS through an agency called VIDA/SIDA (AIDS/LIFE). This program attempts to provide practical alternative services for people with AIDS. In addition, VIDA/SIDA offers an affirming approach to living-and loving-with AIDS. One of the problems that we have in the Puerto Rican community is an unwillingness to deal openly with homosexuality. This has resulted also in much denial regarding AIDS. A VIDA/SIDA educational program takes on the question of people's right to exercise their own sexual preference.

In Chicago, we also have a housing program, Barrios United for Housing Improvement (El Bohio), where we now have twenty-four units. We are trying to develop a whole new conception of housing in which poor people in this community can afford housing. They can be part of the maintenance of their housing unit and property. One of our goals is that everybody will ultimately end up owning their own apartment. There are two types of private property: private property for consumption, which everybody needs (including housing), and private property for exploitation. We seek to end the notion of private property for exploitation.

We have a legal program, the West Side Law Office, that has been around for a number of years offering legal services at low cost. The Center houses a very extensive library, with the largest collection of Puerto Rican literature outside of New York City. We have our own publishing house, Editorial El Coqui, and we have published over twenty-five books on the Puerto Rican reality since its inception in 1975.

All of these programs are part of our own process of liberation and empowerment. With the Centers as a base, we hope that the people of this community will take their destiny into their own hands.

I think that the most important thing that U.S. citizens of European descent—white people—have to be conscious of is the fact that there are colonial relations within the U.S. They have to acknowledge that racism exists, which cannot be ended simply by legislation. They have to understand that colonialism has been a crime against humanity that was started 500 years ago with the conquest of the Americas, the enslavement of African people, and the destruction of Native people on this continent.

That reality has to be reconstructed, and this can only take place when the oppressed nationalities within the U.S. exercise our right of self-determination. North Americans must begin to take leadership from Third World people within this country. In this process, a unity can be built based on mutual respect, and based on the fact that these "nonwhite" people are capable of determining the course of events, *the course of our own history*.

There are many ways in which we can work together. There are large groups of people in this country, particularly in the religious sector, who have demonstrated tremendous commitment to the struggle for social justice. They have gone to jail; they have denounced U.S. militarism. These people, I believe, are beacons of hope for the kind of relationships that we must build, with people who understand solidarity. We must come together from the notion that we are all involved in a process of human liberation. As Erich Fromm once said, "The vocation of the human being is to be human." I believe that we all, within our own circles and within our own means, can add our grains of sand to the construction of a new and better world. ★

* *Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center, and the Pedro Albizu Campos High School, along with Editorial El Coqui, are located at 1671 N. Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647 (**La Patria Radical**, an affiliated bilingual publication, is produced monthly)*
* *Other JAC Puerto Rican Cultural Centers are also located at: 138 Jefferson Street, Hartford, CT 06106; 203 East 115 Street, New York, NY 10029; 3604 N. 7 Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19140; and Box 613, Dorchester, MA 02124.*
* *VIDA/SIDA (AIDS/LIFE), BOHIO housing Project, and the West Town Community Law Office may be reached at 2048 W. Division, Chicago, IL 60622*
* ***Puerto Rican Nationalism**, by Jose Lopez, Editorial El Coqui, Chicago, 1977 (available at above address)*
* ***Puerto Ricans: born in the u.s.a.**, by Clara E. Rodriquez, Westview Press, 1991*
* ***Down These Mean Streets**, by Piri Thomas, Alfred Knopf Publishers, 1968 (a classic literature piece on Puerto Ricans in the U.S.)*

Why Not Freedom for Puerto Rico?

Building Solidarity in the U.S.A.

an interview with TFLAC member Jean Zwickel

by Meg Starr of the Free Puerto Rico Committee

I will never forget meeting solidarity activist Ruth Reynolds in 1984. The Free Puerto Rico Committee (FPR) was reeling from a Grand Jury investigation of the independence movement, to which one of our members had been subpoenaed. Our member had refused to cooperate and, like the Independentistas who had also been subpoenaed, she had been sent to jail. When we spoke of this to Ruth, she looked at us sternly and said, "Just another sacrifice for the struggle!" Then she looked away and fell silent. Perhaps she was remembering her own experience as the first European-American to be jailed for supporting Puerto Rican independence, or she might have been remembering Pedro Albizu Campos and the other Nationalist Party leaders she had known – some jailed, some disappeared, others beaten or shot – all in a long history of resistance to colonialism. Without offering us consolation, she had put our trouble in perspective.

There is an old saying in Africa that "as long as the hunters write the history, we will never learn about the lion's perspective." The other view we won't be told about is that of those hunters who refuse to hunt. We need to learn the real history of Puerto Rico from the Puerto Rican's perspective, but we also need to hear from those European-Americans who have said "NO" to colonialism. The majority of white citizens, middle-class and working-class, have swallowed the lies of jingoism and accepted the benefits of stolen land or higher wages based on the exploitation of foreign or Native Peoples. Who refused?

Before Ruth Reynolds, Jean Zwickel and their colleagues "discovered" the Puerto Rican movement, progressive organizations in the U.S. had done very little work on issues of Puerto Rican colonialism. After the Spanish-American War of 1898, an American Anti-Imperialist League did form, protesting the U.S. military take-over of Guam, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. The League numbered 40,000 members at its height, and the political reasons for opposing imperialism were varied. Some expressed genuine humanitarian concerns, while others offered a racist isolationist perspective and feared an influx of "uncivilized colored people" to the U.S.

A progressive Italian-American congressman, Vito Marcantonio, spoke out in Congress during the late 1930s and 1940s, supporting Puerto Rican independence and a process of decolonization. After the infamous Ponce Massacre in 1937, when the U.S. directed Puerto Rican police to open fire on unarmed demonstrators, killing 21 and wounding 150, the American Civil Liberties Union wrote a report condemning the event.

When Jean and Ruth founded the American League For Puerto Rican Independence in 1946, it became the first progressive U.S. group to specifically dedicate itself to Puerto Rican solidarity. The American League leaders challenged their fellow pacifists by supporting the Nationalist Party, which was not a pacifist organization. After the 1950 Jayuya rebellion on the island, when 5,000 Nationalists were jailed or shot, Ruth Reynolds spent seventeen months in prison for "advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government in Puerto Rico." Rather than increasing support in this time of repression, the American League and the Nationalist Party were isolated from other progressive peace and justice groups. The American League dissolved shortly after Ruth's release from jail.

During the 1960s, the Independence movement recovered from the repression of the previous decade. Within the U.S., the Puerto Rican Young Lords exposed the colonialism that existed in our inner cities as well as abroad. The national liberation and resistance movements in Vietnam taught a generation of "new leftists" the possibilities for new forms of solidarity and support. Out of these lessons, renewed activity focusing on Puerto Rico seemed possible. In 1974, the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee had twelve chapters throughout the U.S., and

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Jean Zwickel has been a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation for almost fifty years. Active in Puerto Rico solidarity work since the 1940's, Jean was a co-founder, along with Ruth Reynolds, of the American League for Puerto Rican Independence. She is author of ***Voices of Independence*** *(White Rose Press, 1988), which has been published in both English and Spanish. She also has been active with the Unitarian Universalist Peace Fellowship and with local Unitarian churches in California.*

Meg Starr is a leading member of the Free Puerto Rico Committee, a national solidarity organization founded in 1977. A teacher and director at numerous day care centers, she is currently a Professor of Early Childhood Education at Touro College in New York. She is also a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

hundreds of members. Though PRSC split after only a few years, with differences over support of Grand Jury resisters and the imprisoned Nationalists, the Free Puerto Rico Committee was formed in 1977 (under the name "New Movement") and has continued to educate North Americans about the realities of Puerto Rican colonialism – both in Puerto Rico and here at home.

The following interview with Jean was conducted to bridge the gap between our generations of activism and to understand the continuity of our work and the work that still needs to be done.

How did you first become a supporter of Puerto Rican independence?

It seemed a tragedy at the time, but it turned my life around in the direction of world concerns. I lost my job as a French teacher along with an easy, conventional life. As luck would have it, no other teaching job turned up. I retreated to a religious, pacifist community in New York City, the Harlem Ashram. Founded by Jay Holmes Smith, former missionary to India deported because of his support for Gandhi, the Ashram was involved not only in interracial and peace work but in active support of "Free India!"

Pedro Albizu Campos, Nationalist Party leader who was bedridden in a New York hospital, heard of our concern for India and invited us to visit him. If freedom for India, why not freedom for Puerto Rico, the responsibility of our own government?

At first, our group seemed isolated in its support of independence. Pacifists were not only disinterested, but regarded us as "out of the fold" because of our association with the "revolutionary" Albizu Campos. A. Philip Randolph, international president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was a supporter of the Ashram, but not of Puerto Rico. The one contact we had with a Socialist was unfortunate. We had formed an American Committee for Independence and were delighted when a Socialist friend joined in. Much to our dismay, however, he presented a set of by-laws which did not clearly support a process of decolonization. We turned in distress to Pearl Buck, who advised us to dissolve and start over again.

I recall the incident in which Vito Marcantonio, New York congressional representative and member of the American Labor Party, ripped out a bug from Don Pedro's hospital wall after venting his outrage over the intrusion into Don Pedro's privacy. The American Friends Service Committee published selected speeches by Marcantonio, including one in which he introduced his first bill for the independence of Puerto Rico.

Lydia Collazo speaks of sympathetic support by members of the Catholic Worker during the imprisonment of her parents. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has supported Puerto Rican Independence since the days of its founder, Jane Addams, an outspoken anti-imperialist. In general, however, we found ourselves in a wilderness of ignorance about Puerto Rico and the whole issue of colonialism.

How do you think that has changed over the years?

This interview could never have occurred when I first joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation forty-eight years ago. Recently, Fellowship has ventured a few articles on Puerto Rico. I struck a wall of silence whenever I visited the War Resisters League office, until its National Conference of 1990 included Puerto Rico in its agenda.

You are constantly lobbying within the pacifist community for more support for the Puerto Rican independence movement. Why do you think, with so many other issues to address, that the peace movement should do more work around Puerto Rico?

The formation of the United Nations Decolonization Committee proclaimed "the necessity of bringing a speedy and unconditional end to colonialism in all its forms and manifestations." It declared that "subjection of peoples to alien domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, and is contrary to the charter of the United Nations and an impediment to promotion of world peace and cooperation." As a longtime pacifist, I have tried for years to bring this realization to peace organizations. There are many facets to the creation of a peaceful world. I expect that at one time or another I have given support to practically all issues comprising peace. But colonial oppression is an issue that has been widely ignored and is only beginning to receive recognition.

In the past, peacemaker Ralph Templin fasted in Puerto Rico in his concern for the imprisonment of Nationalists. Quakers succeeded in ousting the U.S. Navy from Culebra. Ruth Reynolds led peace marches. But then the peace movement seemed to lose interest, when it should be giving encouragement to nonviolent solutions.

President Wilson once remarked that it was embarrassing for our country to have a colony. As pacifists, we must be aware of the injustice of subjugating Puerto Rico to our own benefit. In these days, declared by the United Nations as the decade for decolonization, at a time when our government proposes a plebiscite on the political status of Puerto Rico, at a time when many celebrate the "invasion" of Columbus and the Spanish forces, at a time when states throughout the world are declaring themselves free and independent, it is high time for pacifists to become informed about Puerto Rico and the moral necessity for self-determination.

One of the Puerto Rican independence movement's current campaigns is a unified demand from the major organizations to free the political prisoners and POWs. As a pacifist, how do you support the release of someone accused of armed activities against U.S. government, government property, who take the position that they are anticolonial combatants and should be tried under international law?

A Nationalist friend, art teacher and daughter of Oscar

Collazo once teased me about how I, as a pacifist, could associate with "terrorists". A publisher once refused help with my book, **Voices of Independence**, asserting that I could not possibly call myself a pacifist and write about Puerto Ricans who have been involved in violence. Don Pedro knew that I was a pacifist when he had me prepare a speech about nonviolence. My independentista friends know that I am a pacifist. But we respect each other in the realization that we are all working for the same cause, each in our own way. Independentista friends appreciate the fact that pacifists have an important role to play in their liberation.

Luz María González

As for destruction of government property, some of our pacifists have done a good job at it, though armed only with hammers! Actually, most of the violence has been on the part of our government and Puerto Rican violence has occurred only in retaliation.

I know a number of the nineteen Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war. Some have not committed any act of violence, but are accused of belonging to the militant FALN, drawing a sentence of 35 years. Juan Segarra Palmer, accused of participating in the Wells Fargo robbery in which no lives were taken, drew a sentence of sixty-five years, way out of proportion to sentencing of nonpolitical prisoners. Alejandrina Torres was subjected to almost two years in the control unit of [the federal prison in] Lexington, Kentucky. She was held in a small cubicle with no windows, twenty-three hour lock-up , and a video camera focused on her at all times. National indignation forced the closing of the unit.

At the International Tribunal held in New York during December 1990, the issue of political prisoners and POWs was addressed. Charges against the government of the United States, and those involved, are stated as follows: "The above named defendants are charged with forced colonization and enslavement of Sovereign peoples, genocide, illegal declarations of war against people seeking national liberation, failure to comply with fundamental laws and principles of international law and human rights and conspiracy to commit the above acts. The indictment also charges the defendants with illegal and arbitrary arrests and detentions, denial of fair trials, denial of habeas corpus, cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment of prisoners." The judges, of international prestige, dealt with the over one hundred political prisoners, including not only Puerto Ricans, but Blacks, Mexicans, Native Americans, as well as a few Caucasians. Whether or not they committed acts of violence did not obscure the fact that human rights are being denied to people struggling for liberation.

Prisoners of war declare that, since the United States invaded Puerto Rico and is still carrying out acts of violence against independentistas, war still exists between Puerto Rico and the United States. I have been visiting with three of the Puerto Rican political prisoners and POWs at Pleasanton FCI. They are beautiful, deeply committed young women. They are gentle but firm in dedication to the cause of independence. One of my friends, Lolita Lebrón, is a deeply spiritual woman, now engaged in writing religious poetry. I'm not about to tell her that she should not have attacked our Congress, after she has suffered twenty-five years of imprisonment. I do not condone her violence, but I can understand the frustration and bitterness over continual harassment by our government, her patriotic fervor no less than that of Patrick Henry.

Describe an experience, in your years of involvement with the Puerto Rican independence movement, that, more that any other, exemplifies the spirit of the movement.

There are several experiences I could elaborate on: the little fishing boats of Vieques encircling U.S. battleships; vigiling with a dentist and his wife whose son was twice incarcerated for refusing to answer to the federal grand jury; walking with Nationalists to the cemetery in commemoration of the twenty-one killed in the Ponce Massacre; marching with thousands on a Fourth of July celebration in demand of independence for Puerto Rico. These have all been moving experiences.

But one personal experience that impressed me most deeply was the 1981 destruction of the squatter community, Villa Sin Miedo (Town Without Fear). We had been camping with the community, which declared itself a "land rescue" of territory the government had set aside for housing and had refused to release to the community. They established through hard work a beautiful settlement of some 250 families, digging out roads by hand, laying water pipes, building homes and a small chapel, planting gardens. The last picture I took of the community, just two days before the invasion, was of a man on his knees sowing seeds. It typified the hope of the community for survival.

Troops moved in, drove the people from their homes, set fire to the houses and all their belongings, bulldozed the gardens – a typical search-and-destroy tactic. Some of the families moved onto the five acres provided by the Episcopal Church. Previously self-sufficient, they now depended on the provision of tents, food and clothing. A poignant scene was that of a family planting a geranium in front of their tent.

In time, they were able to purchase their own land, rebuild their homes, and plant their gardens. Unfortunately, Hurricane Hugo destroyed again the simple shacks, and once again the people were forced to rebuild.

I see in this community the hope for economic independence. Muñoz Marín, first governor elected by the people, renounced his efforts toward independence with the conviction that there must first be economic self-sufficiency. Here we have a community growing its own food, developing home industries as well as a clothing factory, freeing themselves from external dependency. We know that governing a colony requires a docile and dependent people, hence the efforts of our government to destroy Villa Sin Miedo.

There are other "land rescue" communities cooperating to develop democratic procedures and learning from each other. I see this as a necessary preparation for nonviolent achievement of economic and eventually political independence. ★

When the Free Puerto Rico Committee was first formed, there was great excitement as well as difficulty. On the one hand, 1979 was the year that the five Nationalist prisoners were released from prison after over twenty-five years. A widespread campaign had forced President Jimmy Carter to grant them amnesty. On the other hand, in the following years, over thirty Puerto Rican independentistas were jailed on various charges of conspiracy, many of them calling for recognition as prisoners of war, acknowledging that the current state of colonialism was in fact a state of war.

Over the past several years, some support has once again begun to grow—both for the POWs as well as for the Puerto Rican movement as a whole. The National Council of Churches Prophetic Justice Unit now sponsors a special Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project. Progressive individuals in the Catholic community, especially from the Plowshares movement, have provided important support, many of them being educated about Puerto Rican colonial reality while serving prison time alongside the independentistas! The National Lawyers Guild, Mobilization for Survival, and War Resisters League have all had recent subcommittees on Puerto Rico; the Americans Friends Service Committee, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and MADRE have all carried substantial information on Puerto Rico through tours, newsletter articles ,and information bulletins. A new organization, the U.S.-Puerto Rico Solidarity Network, has also recently been formed.

The Free Puerto Rico Committee continues to publish an occasional newsletter, along with regular informational leaflets on the environment, the military, and the general impact of colonialism on the island. We hold educational events, conferences, and teach-ins on International Women's Day, on the anniversary of the U.S. invasion, and, as appropriate, given events in the Puerto Rican community. Maintaining a close relationship with the Puerto Rican Cultural Centers in the U.S., we have held "reality tours" of these centers for North Americans, and have begun to sponsor brigades to the island. Direct fund-raising for the upkeep of the centers is also a part of our ongoing educational work. Joining in coalition for demonstrations and direct actions, we struggle to continue our solidarity in a way that is accountable to the Puerto Ricans themselves. At this time of increased activity, it is important for us all to adhere to the principle of non-sectarianism and to work, as Jean stated, pacifists and non-pacifists alike, for an end to colonialism.

* *Free Puerto Rico Committee, P.O.B. 0022512 Cadman Plaza Station, Brooklyn, NY, 11202-0052; 1671 N. Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647; 3543 18 St. #17, San Francisco, CA 94110 (publishes a regular newsletter in English, along with various educational booklets and leaflets)*

* ***Voices of Independence**, by Jean Zwickel, White Star Press, 1988, in English or Spanish, available from 2150 Goff Avenue, Pittsburg, CA 94565*

So Now What Can I Do?

some suggested actions and resources

Let not Americans who believe that they believe in democracy evade any longer this responsibility. Let us not plead ignorance—for to plead ignorance is to confess to indolence and indifference. It is worse—it is to confess to a sense of racial and national superiority, for, while we have been ignorant of the *details* of American rule in Puerto Rico, we have not been ignorant of the fact of American rule in Puerto Rico. Knowledge of that fact is sufficient for any true anti-imperialist, who must believe that no government that takes its authority from anything except the will of the governed can possibly be valid.

*– **Ruth Reynolds**, long-time pacifist and supporter of Puerto Rican sovereignty*

1) **Reflect and Study** – This booklet is only an introduction to the range of issues implied by colonialism in Puerto Rico. Further reading, from an historical perspective, might be useful. Gorden K. Lewis' ***Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean*** (1963) and ***Notes on the Puerto Rican Revolution*** (1974), both published by Monthly Review Press in New York, have become classic background studies for a North American audience. The new ***Caribbean Connection: Puerto Rico*** (1990), published by the Ecumenical Program for Inter-American Communication and the Network of Educators Committees on Central America (1118 22 Street NW, Washington D.C. 20037, available for $15.00) is also a helpful overview, especially for those teaching about Puerto Rico.

2) **Theological Reflection** – The best resource for faith-based information about colonialism is the National Ecumenical Movement (PRISA), which carries most of its information in Spanish but has some English-language booklets (P.O.B. 2448, Bayamon, Puerto Rico 00621).

3) **Organize a Seminar or Study Group** – TFLAC hopes that this booklet be used in small group discussions. Contact us (515 Broadway, Santa Cruz CA. 95060) regarding a study guide to accompany "The Cost of Colonialism." The Free Puerto Rico Committee (address listed below) also holds occasional background classes, with readings and guided questions available for use.

4) **Stay In Touch** – Keep informed about the latest news: both on the island and among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. ***Claridad*** (Ave. Ponce de Leon 1866, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00909-9990) is a progressive Spanish-language newsmagazine. The monthly ***La Patria Radical*** (1671 N. Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647) covers activities of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. in a bilingual format. Get on the mailing list of grassroots organizations in Puerto Rico, such as Misión Industrial (P.O.B. 3728, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936) and the Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace (P.O.B. 21226, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00928), which focus on social justice and anti-military issues, in Spanish and English.

5) **Travel to Puerto Rico** – Join a study or work brigade, see Puerto Rico first-hand, and get more than a tourist's-eye-view. The Juan Antonio Corretjer Cultural Centers (1671 N. Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647; 138 Jefferson Street, Hartford, CT 06106; 203 East 115 Street, New York, NY 10029; 3604 N. 7 Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19140; and Box 613, Dorchester, MA 02124) organize brigades to Adjuntas where participants learn about people's resistance to colonialism and learn about the environmental, social and grassroots alternatives that are developing there. The Free Puerto Rico Committee (addresses below) have also organized "reality tours" through Puerto Rican Communities in the U.S. The U.S./Puerto Rico Solidarity Network (G.P.O. Box 1565, New York, NY 10001) organizes semi-annual labor delegations and trips to Vieques.

6) **Write to Congress** – El Nacionalista de Puerto Rico (Suite 587 Ave. E. Pol 497, La Cumbre, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00926) is suggesting that U.S.-based groups write to Senator Joseph Biden, Chair of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary (U.S. Senate Building, Washington D.C. 20510) and Congressman John Conyers, Chair of the House Committee on Governmental Operations, encouraging a full Congressional investigation regarding the F.B.I. murders of two young independence activists at Cerro Maravilla in 1978. TFLAC's Jean Zwickel also recommends writing to local representatives in support of Congressman Ronald Dellums (D-CA) House Joint Resolution 120, calling for U.S. adherence to U.N. standards of decolonization and support of Puerto Rican sovereignty.

7) **Adopt-A-Prisoner** – Support the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners who are being held in U.S. jails, many of whom face life in prison for the charge of "seditious conspiracy." Writing or visiting a prisoner provides an important personal means of support, and the National Committee to Free P.R. POWs (P.O.B. 476698, Chicago, IL 60647) can supply updated lists of prisoners' addresses, individual case histories, and campaigns relating to their conditions. The Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project (2120 Lincoln Street, Evanston IL 60201) has information about how local churches in several cities have "adopted" prisoners and done successful educational work within their parish context.

8) **Buy Coffee and Send Seeds** – Material aid to grassroots groups is an important and direct way of showing solidarity. Café Madre Isla coffee is produced by the environmentalist Arts and Cultural Workshop (Apartado 704, Adjuntas, PR 00601), and available directly or through the Cultural Centers (see addresses above). Jean Zwickel also has begun a private campaign to send seeds to the nonviolent squatter community of Villa Sin Miedo (c/o Roberto Resto, Alturas de Rio Grande, Calle 9 #411, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico 00745).

9) **Hold a Forum or Vigil** - Help to spread the word about the oldest colony in the Americas. Contact any of the groups nearest you for speakers, videos, and additional materials. Choose an appropriate date, such as July 25 (anniversary of the U.S. invasion), or September 23 (anniversary of the anti-colonial uprising against Spain, "Grito de Lares").

10) **Join In Solidarity** – The Free Puerto Rico Committee (P.O.B. 0022512 Cadman Plaza St., Brooklyn, NY 11202-0052; 3543 18 Street #17, San Francisco, CA 94110; 1671 N. Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647) has been organizing North American support for Puerto Rico since 1977. In addition to their newsletter, they can provide speakers, materials, and help set up events. The U.S./Puerto Rico Solidarity Network (see address above), has produced the ***"Puerto Rico Update"*** since 1989, and also has a variety of available resources and resource people. Join one of these existing solidarity organizations, get on their mailing lists, form a local support group, or make sure that Puerto Rico is a matter of ongoing concern in your own local peace/justice/anti-intervention group.

Rio Grande de Loiza

by Julia de Burgos

Rio Grande de Loiza! . . . Extend yourself into my spirit
and let my soul get lost in your streams,
to search for the fountain that stole you away as a child
and in a mad impulse returned you to the path.

Coil yourself around my lips and let me drink you,
to feel you mine for a brief moment,
and hide you from the world and hide you in yourself,
and hear astonished voices in the mouth of the wind.

Get off for an instance from the loin of the earth,
and look for the intimate secret of my longing;
lose yourself in the flight of my bird imagination,
and leave a water rose for my illusions.

Rio Grande de Loiza! . . . My source, my river,
ever since the maternal petal raised me to the world;
with you went down from the rugged hills,
to look for new furrows, my pale desires;
and all my childhood was a poem in the river,
and a river in the poem of my first dream.

Adolescence came. Life surprised me
pinned to the widest part of your eternal voyage;
and I was yours a thousand times, and in love,
you awoke my soul and kissed my body.

Where did you take the waters that bathed
my figure with the stream of the newly risen sun?
Who knows in what remote Mediterranean country
some fawn on the beach will be possessing me!

Who knows in what showers of distant lands
I will be spilling in order to open up new furrows;
or if perhaps, tired of biting hearts,
I will be freezing in ice crystals.

Rio Grande de Loiza! . . . Blue. Dark. Red.
Blue mirror, fallen blue piece of sky;
naked white flesh turned black
each time night gets in your bed;
red strips of blood when under rain
floods of mud vomit on the hills.

Man river, but man with purity of river,
because in your blue kiss you give your blue soul.

My very dear river. Man river. The only man
who, kissing my body, has kissed my soul.

Rio Grande de Loiza! . . . Big river, big tear.
The biggest of all of our insular tears,
if it were not for those flowing out
through the eyes of my soul for my enslaved people.

Julia de Burgos is one of Puerto Rico's most renowned poets, publishing three books and contributing to many journals and magazines. As a member of the Women's Section of the Nationalist Party in the 1930's, and as editor of ***Pueblos Hispanos*** *with Juan Antonio Corretjer in the 1940's, she was also active in the anti-colonial political movements of her time. A ravine near the "Grand River of Loiza" flowed near Julia's house as a child, located in the Santa Clara Barrio of Carolina, Puerto Rico. This translation is taken from* ***Puerto Rican Women****, (Rebeldia Publications, Chicago, 1983).*

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